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The People's Rights against  
Modern Assumptions of  
Ministerial Power.  
1850

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THE  
PEOPLE'S RIGHTS:

A DEFENCE OF THE CONCESSIONS AND CODE OF LAWS OF 1797,  
AND THE CONSTITUTION OF WESLEYAN METHODISM,

AGAINST

THE MODERN ASSUMPTIONS OF MINISTERIAL  
POWER;

BEING A REPRINT OF THE SOUTHWARK ADDRESS AND RESOLUTIONS, AND THE  
REPLY TO THE REV. RICHARD WATSON.

WITH AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING THE DEED OF DECLARATION, THE PLAN OF PACIFICATION,  
THE CONCESSIONS OF 1797, AND THE LAWS (SO CALLED) OF 1835.

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A NEW EDITION.

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LONDON:  
JOHN KAYE AND CO., 80, FLEET STREET.

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1850.

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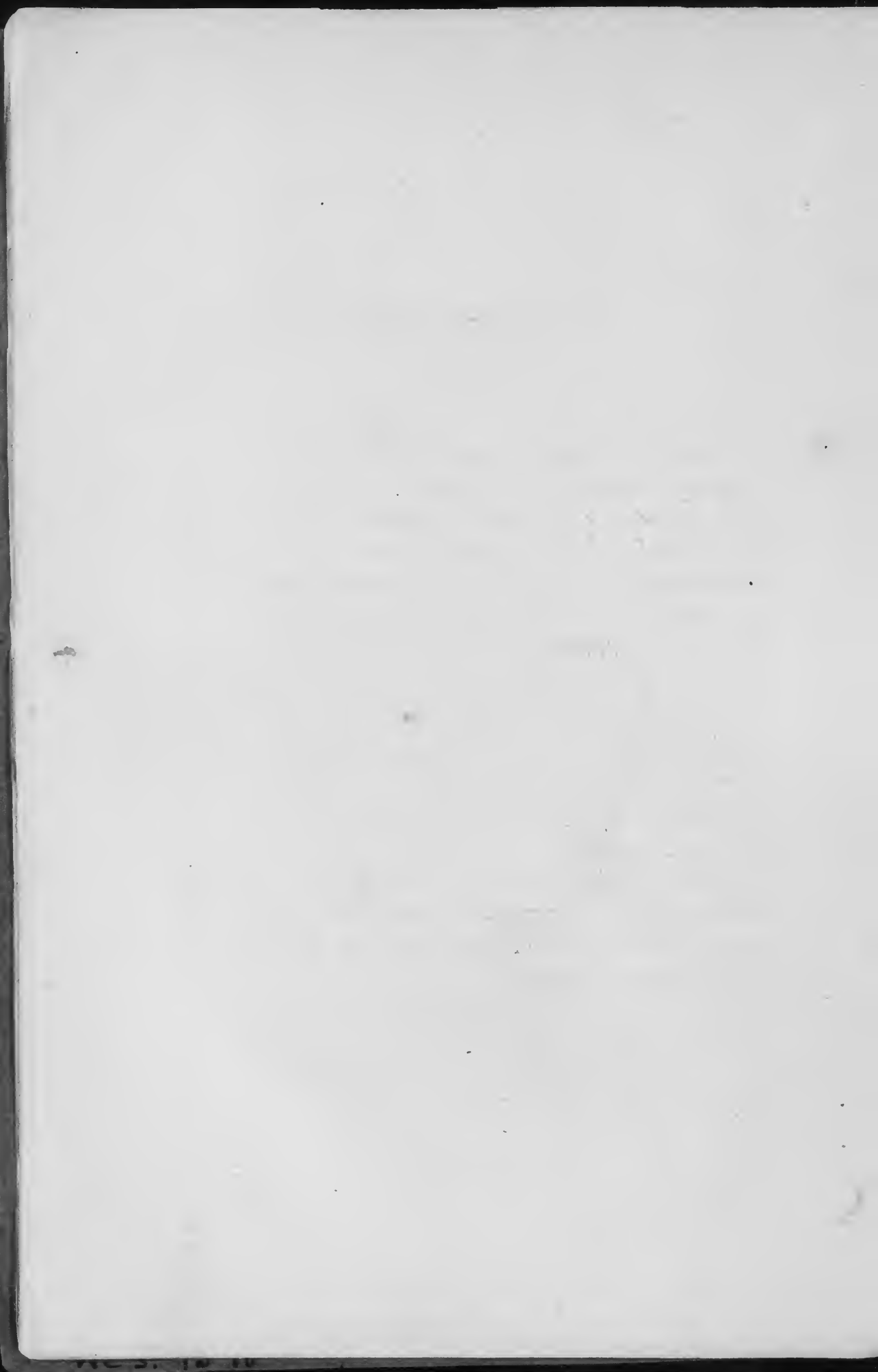
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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No apology is needed for the reissue of the able productions contained in the following pages. At the time they appeared they excited considerable attention, and, had the dominant party in the Wesleyan Conference been wise enough to have listened to the forcible argumentation by which the writer supported his position, they would have saved both themselves and the Connexion the fearful, but hopeful, agitation which now prevails. These productions, after going through several editions, had become scarce, and the present generation of Wesleyan Methodists were all but ignorant of their existence. We have deemed it important to reprint them, leaving out only what was of mere temporary interest. We know of no better exposition of the polity and constitution of Methodism, and as such we commend the succeeding pages to the careful consideration of every Wesleyan Methodist and every Wesleyan Reformer.



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# THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS.

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## ADDRESS OF THE LONDON SOUTH CIRCUIT TO THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONFERENCE.

REV. AND DEAR SIRS,—On the 7th of March (1828), a printed circular, bearing the signature of your President, the Rev. John Stephens, was addressed to the superintendents of circuits. It does not appear in what capacity this letter was written, as it is destitute of the official counter-signatures which belong to public documents. This meeting cannot, therefore, notice such a production further than to remark, that it recommends to the superintendents of circuits “to put the accredited documents, relative to the Leeds business, in free circulation among the more intelligent and influential part of their people,” adding, “they may be had of Mr. Mason.”

It becomes this meeting, however, to inform the Conference, that the “*free circulation*” of the above “*accredited documents*,” has produced in this circuit a very great and general sensation—that the minds of our “*more intelligent and influential*” friends have been filled with alarm, at what they conceive to be very gross violations, not only of the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism, as established in the circuits by long usage and custom, but of those principles upon which Jesus Christ founded his outward and visible church, so far as such principles can be deduced from the New Testament,—and that so strong and general had this feeling become, that it was impossible to prevent its being powerfully expressed.

Under these circumstances, the Quarterly Meeting of this circuit, assembled on the 25th day of March (1828), anxious to prevent the calling of irregular meetings, and the adoption of more objectionable means for giving expression to the public feeling,—and entertaining a just concern, as well for the prosperity of the work of God in this circuit, as also for the public character of the Conference, both of which are seriously involved,—did, on mature consideration, record on their minutes a notice, pledging themselves to take the subject into consideration at the next Quarterly Meeting, in reference to the propriety of framing an Address to the Conference.

This meeting having accordingly proceeded to the consideration of the subject referred to in the above notice, beg leave to premise,—

1. That they have no intention whatever of becoming parties in the dispute which has agitated the Leeds Societies; but, distinguishing between that dispute and the proceedings of the Special District

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1. That they have no intention whatever of becoming parties in the dispute which has agitated the Leeds Societies; but, distinguishing between that dispute and the proceedings of the Special District

Meeting thereon, and confining their attention to the accredited documents, so directed by your President to be freely circulated amongst our people, this meeting is deeply concerned at the public avowal of principles, and the unwarrantable exercise of an authority, which, if once admitted, must effectually overturn everything worthy of the name of right or privilege on the part of the laity, and place our societies in a condition of abject subserviency to the Conference, and to its official agents.

2. That this meeting is careful to distinguish between acts of the Conference, and the acts and proceedings of the individuals who assembled at Leeds, under the name of a "Special District Meeting;" and into whatever errors the Conference may have been unhappily led, this meeting cannot bring themselves to believe, that the Conference will ever prove so regardless of its public character, as to give the least countenance or sanction to "the Resolutions of the Special District Meeting, begun at Leeds, on Tuesday, the 4th of December, 1827."

3. That with a view to reduce within as narrow limits as possible the subjects of this Address, this meeting has rejected all reference to the publications of the brethren at Leeds, who have suffered from these proceedings. In adopting this course, the meeting are aware that they confine themselves to statements of facts which would not in any case be relied on as between the contending parties. But as this meeting does not assume the office of judging between contending parties, they are content to take the facts admitted in these "accredited documents,—*to be had of Mr. Mason;*" and they conceive that, in the facts thus admitted, and in the principles applied in explanation and defence of them, there is more than enough to alarm the "*intelligent,*" and to rouse the "*influential part of our people.*"

4. That it will be of no avail to charge this meeting with disaffection to the general institutions and economy of Wesleyan Methodism. The members of this meeting are, many of them, men who have borne the heat and burden of the day in the service of Methodism; and they are all of them sustaining their several stations, they trust, in a manner worthy of themselves, and of the church which has called them to office. They are neither reformers nor radicals; they wish for no changes in the system of Methodism; they are content and satisfied with that system, as it has long been established in this circuit. They do not yield even to the Conference itself, in ardent attachment to the constitution and discipline of the Connexion, as laid down and established by Mr. Wesley; and they would fain hope that there exists, on the part of the Conference, a corresponding disposition, as earnest and sincere as that which animates this meeting, and has called forth the present Address.

Having stated these preliminaries, this meeting entreats the attention of the Conference to the following particulars, in which they insist that the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism has been violated,—the concessions solemnly made by the Conference to the people, in 1797, set aside,—and the rights and privileges of our regularly constituted and acknowledged local authorities, overturned and trampled under foot.

This meeting complains, *specifically*, that by an utter perversion of the institution and design of special district meetings, and an alarming extension of their jurisdiction, a novel and unauthorised tribunal has been erected, modelled according to the caprice of the parties; and which, without the sanction of any recognised law or

principle, has put forth the proudest claims, and has actually usurped, 1st, The power of a superintendent of a circuit; 2nd, The jurisdiction and authority of the leaders' and local preachers' meetings; and, 3rdly, The right of giving laws to the Connexion, and of enacting new tests and declarations to be taken and subscribed by the people.

To establish this complaint, it will be necessary to review, 1st, The Rules of Conference, relating to special district meetings; and, 2ndly, The proceedings of the Leeds Special District Meeting, forming the subject of complaint.

## PART I.

### REVIEW OF THE RULES RELATIVE TO SPECIAL DISTRICT MEETINGS.

That *travelling preachers alone* are, by the present constitution of Methodism, amenable to special district meetings; and that the application of the judicial and inquisitorial powers of such meetings to officers and members of our societies, is a novel and unauthorised extension of their jurisdiction, will appear by a simple reference to the rules of Conference, authorising and empowering such meetings. These rules and regulations lie scattered in the Minutes of Conference, for the years 1791, 1792, 1793, and 1797; but they may be seen collectively in Dr. Warren's Digest, pp. 123-4-5, and, as they are not numerous, and have been so palpably misconstrued and misapplied, we shall embody the whole of them in the course of the following observations.

It will be unnecessary to remind the Conference that District Meetings, *ordinary* as well as *special*, were unknown to the Methodist Connexion during Mr. Wesley's life. For nearly fifty years after the commencement of this great revival of religion, they had no existence. During this period, the Quarterly Meeting of every circuit, the Leaders' Meeting of every society, and the regular Local Preachers' Meetings, had become universally established and acknowledged; and were in the full employment and exercise of their proper privileges, powers, and prerogatives. The Conference of 1826 declare, that "*regular leaders' meetings have, from the beginning, been found essential to the pastoral care and spiritual prosperity of our societies.*" During this period, the judicial power of the Conference itself had been limited and confined (according to the 8th article of the Deed of Declaration of the 28th February, 1784, by which Mr. Wesley defined the powers of the Conference) to the trial and expulsion of "*members of the Conference admitted into connexion or upon trial.*" They had never presumed, nor been allowed, to cite at their bar the local officers and members of society; such a citation was never heard of; nor can it be believed that, at this period, any leaders' meeting would have lent its authority to compel any of its members to appear and answer charges before either the Conference or a district meeting. The leaders' meetings always retained in their own hands the *inalienable* right of the church to try its own members;—a right distinctly recognised in the New Testament, and uniformly exercised in the primitive church. The Conference had the same right *as to its own members*; but, *not being of itself a church*, it could not pretend to the right of trying the members of any church. On every principle it was surely enough, that the preachers of the

circuit were members of the local meetings, and that the superintendent was allowed to preside. The constitution of Wesleyan Methodism, as it then stood, and as we would fain hope it still exists, rested on the broad basis of established usage and custom.

It was in the Conference of 1791, the first that assembled after Mr. Wesley's death, that Mr. Thompson, the President, brought forward his plan for dividing the Connexion into districts. So little, however, were the people concerned in the matter, that the Conference deemed it sufficient to state the fact without explanation or comment, in the following laconic and apparently irrelevant answer to the preceding question :—

*Question.*—What regulations are necessary for the preservation of our own economy as Mr. Wesley left it?

*Answer.*—Let the three kingdoms be divided into districts.

1791.—The only resolution on the subject which follows the above, is equally vague and unsatisfactory; it provides, that “the assistant of a circuit shall have authority to summon the preachers of his district, who are in full connexion, on any critical case, which, according to the best of his judgment, merits such an interference; and the said preachers, or as many of them as can attend, shall assemble at the place and time appointed by the assistant aforesaid, and shall form a committee for the purpose of determining concerning the business on which they are called; they shall choose a chairman for the occasion, and their decision shall be final, till the meeting of the next Conference, when the chairman of the committee shall lay the minutes of their proceedings before the Conference. Provided, nevertheless, that nothing shall be done by any committee contrary to the resolutions of the Conference.”

Such was the institution of district meetings, whose ordinary business was then left as undefined as their judicial powers in special cases. They were, however, the offspring of the Conference, existing only by its *fiat*, and exercising the powers delegated to them, during the intervals of its yearly meetings; the following general rules must therefore apply to special district meetings :—

*First.*—They can possess no power which the Conference itself does not possess; an agent or deputy cannot derive from his principal greater powers or authority than the principal himself enjoys.

*Secondly.*—They are limited in their authority by the express terms of their commission; a deputy or agent must not be allowed to exceed his instructions.

*Thirdly.*—A rule which, when taken separately, is of doubtful application, can only be applied in conformity with what is express and clear in that class of rules to which it belongs;—if among a dozen grants in a Royal Charter, eleven of them shall expressly establish the jurisdiction of a corporation over a certain town or city; and the twelfth shall not be so express, but shall authorise the corporation to inquire and determine, in general terms, without specifying in what affairs; this rule must be understood, like all the rest, to apply to the affairs of the corporation, and not to those of the kingdom.

What the “critical case,” or “business,” mentioned in the preceding regulation, might be, this meeting can have no motive to inquire. But that this original grant of authority, in “critical cases,” did not empower them to inquire into the conduct, and to punish the transgressions of our local officers and members of society, is evident,—

1. Because the Conference itself had no jurisdiction in such matters, and, therefore, could not delegate any such powers.

2. Because the jurisdiction, in all such matters, was previously vested in the regular local authorities, by the long-established usage and custom of the Connexion;—a usage and custom which have been repeatedly acknowledged in the Minutes of Conference, particularly in those of 1797.

3. Because there is nothing in the terms of the regulation, nor in any subsequent regulation, relating to special district meetings, which either expressly, or by implication, conveys any such authority to district meetings.

The "*critical case*" intended by the rule must, therefore (according to the third rule of construction we have cited), be understood to be one not otherwise provided for; and with which no existing local authority had power to deal. Such a case, for instance, as the trial and suspension of a travelling preacher during the intervals of Conference. But as the local authorities have full power to deal with any case affecting local officers and members of society; and as the Conference itself has never been known to possess or exercise any such power, the rule cannot, without violent distortion, be applied to any such cases.

4. This same Conference of 1791, appointed Dr. Coke President of the ensuing Irish Conference; and, in Question 22nd, and Answer, they show plainly enough, what they intended to be the business of the district committees. They anticipated letters of complaint from Ireland relative to this appointment, and very delicately refer all appeals to the district committees; whose office was, as we shall see, to determine appeals against preachers; and to redress the grievances of the people, where the conduct or appointments of preachers was complained of.

5. It were in vain to multiply arguments against an extravagant and unsupportable interpretation of a vague rule. The Conference of 1791, deeply concerned for the loss of their venerable Founder, surrounded with enemies, and uncertain as to the issues, meditated no such attack on the rights and privileges of the constituted and acknowledged local authorities. On the contrary, they entered into an express engagement, "to follow strictly the plan which Mr. Wesley left them at his death," and published this engagement in the same Minutes. The rule itself was, in effect, superseded by more explicit regulations made at the following Conference. Dr. Warren appears to have considered it obsolete, and has not noticed it in his Digest; and the party who got up the Special District Meeting at Leeds, do not pretend to have derived their authority from this original Minute of 1791.

1792.—In the Minutes of Conference for the year 1792, it is asked (Question 20), "What further regulations shall be made concerning the management of the districts?" And in answer to this inquiry, we have the three following articles applicable to special district meetings:—

1. "The chairman shall have authority to call a meeting of the committee of his district, on any application of the preachers or people which appears to him to require it. But he must never individually interfere with any other circuit than his own.

2. "Whenever the chairman has received any *complaint against a preacher, either from preachers or people*, he shall send an exact

account of the complaint, in writing, to the person accused, with the name of the accuser or accusers, before he calls a meeting of the district committee to examine into the charge.

3. "If it appear, on just grounds, to any superintendent, that the *chairman* of his district has been guilty of any crime or misdemeanour, or that he has neglected to call a meeting of the district committee when there were sufficient reasons for calling it, such superintendent \* shall have authority, in that case, to call a meeting. The committee thus assembled, shall have power, if they judge necessary, to try the *chairman*, and, if found guilty, to suspend him from being a travelling preacher till the ensuing Conference; or to remove him from the office of *superintendent*, or to depose him from the chair, and to elect another in his place."

The first of these articles is to the same effect as the regulation of the preceding year, and our foregoing remarks will apply to it. The application, on which the chairman is to call a special district meeting, must be an application against, or relative to, a *preacher*, otherwise, the district meeting could have no jurisdiction; and that this is implied, and nothing else, is palpable from what follows, in terms too clear and express to admit of doubt or argument. In both the subsequent rules (and to which the first is merely introductory), we find the proper jurisdiction of special district meetings recognised:—"Whenever the chairman has received any complaint against a *preacher*, either from the preachers or the people," &c., and, "if it appear on just grounds, that the *chairman* has been guilty," &c.—The powers, also, of special district meetings are defined:—"They shall have power to try, to suspend from being a *travelling preacher*, till the ensuing Conference, to remove from the office of *superintendent*, to depose from the chair," &c. But there is not a word of any power to try the people, or to suspend local preachers or leaders.

1793.—In the Minutes of 1793, it is again asked, "Shall any alteration be made concerning the office of a chairman of a district?" And, in answer thereto, we have the two following regulations:—

1. "If any preacher be accused of immorality, the preacher accused, and his accuser, shall respectively choose two preachers of their district; and the chairman of the district shall, with the four preachers chosen as above, try the accused preacher, and they shall have authority, if he be found guilty, to *suspend him* till the ensuing Conference, if they judge it expedient."

2. "If there be any difference between the preachers in a district, the respective parties shall each choose two preachers; and the chairman of the district, with the four preachers so chosen, shall be final arbiters to determine the matter in dispute. In both cases, the chairman shall have a casting vote, in case of an equality."

Here again, as in 1792, the *jurisdiction* of special district meetings is expressly defined: "If any preacher be accused—if there be any difference between the preachers." Their powers correspond also with their jurisdiction, viz., "to try the accused preacher;—to suspend him till the ensuing Conference;—to determine matters in dispute between the preachers in a district."

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\* This is a virtual repeal of the rule of 1791, which gave the *assistant* only the power of calling district meetings, but which power is now limited to the cases here mentioned.



1797.—We find nothing further in the Minutes of Conference on the subject of special district meetings, until the year 1797. This was a trying year to the Conference, in which, to use their own language, they experienced some "*violent convulsions*." The power which they had heretofore claimed and exercised, had excited universal dissatisfaction; the people, not satisfied with the Plan of Pacification conceded in 1795, loudly demand further concessions; and the Conference deem it prudent to meet these demands, by, what then appeared to be, somewhat liberal "*sacrifices in respect of authority, on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers*." Enumerating these sacrifices, the Conference say,—“Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands, as represented in your different public meetings.”—“The whole management of our temporal concerns may now be truly said to be invested in the quarterly meetings, the *district meetings having nothing left them but a negative*. Our societies have a *full check on the superintendent, by means of their leaders’ meeting*, in regard to the introduction of persons into society.”—“The members of our societies are *delivered from every apprehension of clandestine expulsions*; as that superintendent would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice in the presence of the whole meeting of leaders. Such a superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and if such there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren. In short, brethren, *we have given up to you by far the greatest part of the superintendent’s authority*; and if we consider that the quarterly meetings are the sources from whence all temporal regulations, during the intervals of Conference, must now originally spring, we may, taking all these things into our view, truly say, that such have been the sacrifices we have made, that our district committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining, but a bare negative in general, and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draft of the stations.”

Whilst, however, the superintendent and the district meeting were thus stripped of “*the greatest part of their authority*,” and that authority vested in the quarterly meetings and leaders’ meetings, it was necessary, in order to secure to the people the benefit of these concessions, to afford them efficient protection against those preachers who were occasionally disturbing the societies, by agitating questions of strife, and harassing them by arbitrary proceedings. That there were such preachers at that time in the Connexion is evident from Article 7, under the second head of the Plan of Pacification, and from the hope expressed by the Conference, that they had not a superintendent of that disposition. With this view, therefore, and evidently with this view alone, this same Conference of 1797, which granted these concessions to the people, and distinctly recognised the local jurisdictions, thought proper to enlarge (not indeed the power or jurisdiction of special district meetings, there is not a word to that effect in the regulations, but) the authority and power of the President, and of the Chairmen of Districts.

The two regulations passed at this Conference are the last regulations the Conference have made relative to special district meetings. They are as follow :

1. “In order to render our districts more effective, the President of the Conference shall have power, when applied to, to supply a circuit with preachers, if any should die or desist from travelling; and

to sanction any change of preachers, which it may be necessary to make in the intervals of the Conference; and to assist at any district meeting, if applied to for that purpose by the chairman of the district, or by a majority of the superintendents in such district; and he [the President] shall have a right, if written to by any who are concerned, to visit any circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with respect to Methodism, and, in union with the district committee, redress any grievance."

2. "That no chairman *may have cause to complain of the want of power*, in cases which (according to his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary district meeting, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest superintendents, to be incorporated with the district committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and to settle everything, till the Conference."

Let the three plain and universally acknowledged rules of construction, which this meeting has quoted, be applied to the two last regulations, and it will be at once perceived that they give to special district meetings no power whatever to interfere with any local jurisdiction, nor to try any local officer or member of society.

1. Because the Conference possessed no such power or right: but, on the contrary, this very Conference of 1797 published to the world their acknowledgment of quarterly meetings, leaders' meetings, and local preachers' meetings; and declared, that they had given up to them "the whole management of their temporal affairs," and "by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority;" and not only so, but so great had been the "sacrifices in respect of authority" which they had made, "on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers," that "the district committees themselves had hardly any authority remaining." And the nature and avowed design of these sacrifices is explained to be, the protection of the people against the preachers. "Our societies," says the Conference, "have a full check on the superintendent by means of their leaders' meetings." "The members of our societies are delivered from every apprehension of clandestine expulsion." Surely this was not the Conference which armed special district meetings against the local authorities!

2. Because there are no express terms in this new commission of inquiry and redress, which authorise the President to interfere with any local jurisdiction. No such thing is named in the rule; quarterly meetings, leaders' meetings, and local preachers' meetings, are not even alluded to; and is it to be said, that these long established and solemnly recognised jurisdictions are to be overturned by a side-wind? are their power and jurisdiction to be usurped, and their own members subjected to the assumed right of inquiry and judicial powers of a special district meeting, on the authority of a rule which does not name them? Did this Conference of 1797 intend anything of the kind? Had they any secret design in making these rules to nullify and destroy their own concessions, at the very moment of making them? To admit such an idea, would be to charge this Conference with the deepest perfidy! Undoubtedly they had no such design.

3. Because, if there had been anything doubtful as to the nature of those "affairs," into which the President is authorised by the rule to "inquire;" or those "grievances," which, in union with the district committee, he is empowered "to redress," it must have been determined by this very conjunction with the district meeting; the whole class of rules relating to district meetings, having conferred on



them no jurisdiction, except over their own members, the preachers. This meeting, however, cannot discover anything doubtful or ambiguous in these two last regulations. The first of them opens with matters applicable to preachers only, and contemplates "any *change of preachers* which it may be necessary to make in the intervals of Conference,"—expressions which, at a time *when superintendents required to be checked by leaders' meetings*, when *district meetings* were to be *stript of all but a bare negative*, when the people were to be protected from *clandestine expulsions*, sufficiently indicate the nature of those grievances, which the President was required to redress, in union with the district meeting, without whom the necessary *change of preachers* could not be effected.

## PART II.

### REVIEW OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEEDS SPECIAL DISTRICT MEETING.

Having thus reviewed all the Minutes of Conference relating to special district meetings, and shown, beyond all contradiction, that the application of the powers of such meetings to the trial and expulsion of local officers and members of society, is an utter perversion of their institution and design; this meeting now proceeds to remark on the *constitution, claims, and conduct* of the special district meeting, begun at Leeds on the 4th December last, as set forth in the "*accredited document*," containing the resolutions of this new and illegal tribunal.

I. The *Constitution* of this meeting was as unfair—as unauthorised, by any existing law or regulation, as was every part of their proceedings. Amongst the parties composing the meeting, we find, 1st, "the Rev. John Stephens, President of the Conference, invited by the chairman of the district, under article 1st of the Minutes of 1797." But who authorised the President to invite two official advisers, to accompany him on this expedition of inquiry? Will it be said, that the Secretary of the Conference is, *by office*, entitled to attend and advise the President on all occasions? And, is this doctrine to be held in regard to the ex-President also? In a case, however, in which the rights of our local officers and members of society are to be dealt with, we demand the law which authorises this proceeding. If no law can be produced, we think the matter too grave, and too serious, to admit of pleas and arguments. A man may have as many secretaries and advisers as he pleases; but unless such individuals can produce authority for assuming the same rights as their master, and attending every meeting of which he is a member, we account the assumption illegal.

Again, we find present at this special district meeting, "Messrs. George Marsden, John Bursdall, and Robert Newton, invited by the chairman, under article 3rd of the above regulations." But article 3rd and article 1st of these regulations, are essentially distinct. When, by the 3rd article, the Conference strengthened the hands of the chairman, complaining "of the want of power," by allowing him the counsel and assistance of *three* of the nearest superintendents, they did not intend a council of *six*. The latter article does not contemplate the presence of the President of the Conference, with his *official advisers*. Surely, the chairman, supported by the presence of these official

characters, could not "*complain of the want of power*," and therefore he could have no pretence for calling in the three neighbouring superintendents.

Besides, the rule says, "three of the *nearest* superintendents." Were Manchester and Liverpool among the nearest superintendencies to that of Leeds? Is there not something in this perversion of the spirit and letter of the rule, to which ministers of Jesus Christ ought not to have stooped?

Lastly, we have another invitation, by "the chairman," of individuals "to give *evidence explanatory*!" a pretty plain admission that they were not direct witnesses in the cause. But the chairman, "complaining of the want of power," levies all the forces he can muster. The witnesses explanatory, therefore, are enumerated as constituting, with the others, this assembly; which, thus constituted, was anything rather than the district meeting contemplated by the rules of the Connexion.

There is a crying injustice in this method of constituting special district meetings; and, to say the least, the appearance of a policy which savours not of the church, but of the world. The *injustice* lies in the prejudice done to any party who may have a right of appeal to the Conference. A party, thus situated, would have difficulty enough to contend with the individuals lawfully constituting the district meeting. All other members of the Conference ought to come to the consideration of the question unprejudiced and uncommitted; but if, in addition to the members of the district, a number of the most influential members of the Conference are to be previously incorporated with them, and made parties to their measures, does not an appeal become a farce; and is not all that the Leeds Special District Meeting have addressed to the people, on the subject of appeals, so much mockery? Is it not telling them, that if they complain of oppression, they have a right to appeal to their oppressors for justice?

The *policy* of this course of proceeding is annually developing itself. It is by such means that the hands of faction are strengthened; and individuals, charged with the exercise of power on their own responsibility, are relieved from the restraints and checks which that responsibility imposes. Mr. Grindrod, acting on his individual responsibility, as the superintendent of the circuit, would never have dared to carry matters to the length to which they have been carried at Leeds. Having, by the illegal and improper suspension of a local preacher, roused the whole body to indignant resistance, he must have found means to satisfy them, either by affording the accused local preacher a fair trial, and convincing the meeting that he was unworthy to remain any longer a member of their body, or by giving up the illegal suspension. If compelled to adopt the latter course, the worst that could have come of the matter would have been, that in the Leeds circuit there would have been a local preacher, whom Mr. Grindrod thought unworthy, but whom all his brethren believed to be a worthy member of their body. No sooner, however, is Mr. Grindrod permitted to call in a party of preachers, than his responsibility ceases; and this party, too strong to regard responsibility themselves, are able not only to carry through Mr. Grindrod's measures with a high hand, but expect, in all probability, to carry both him and his measures (now aggravated by their own illegal proceedings) through the ensuing Conference. Thus a comparatively small number of bold

and influential men, are supposed to rule the Connexion; and their will becomes the law. It is thus that the principles of the gospel are abandoned, and Jesus Christ himself is wounded in the house of his friends. St. Paul declared, that "rather than offend a weak brother, he would eat no meat while the world stood;" but this district meeting have occasioned a secession from the society of 1,000 members, for their conscientious objection to the use of an organ, in divine worship, as leading to a departure from our original simplicity, and for meeting together to oppose so unreasonable a mandate. No charge of a moral nature is involved in the proceedings; and it, therefore, becomes this meeting to affirm, that if it were not sinful to retain this multitude in the church, it was sinful to cut them off. Such are the bitter fruits of special district meetings as opposed to the people.

In the Conference, these men are in possession of office, power, and influence; no individual can be expected to withstand them. Remedy and redress are, therefore, conceived by many to be utterly hopeless, unless some other party shall be formed, and shall increase to strength sufficient to contend with the present ascendancy. Happy, indeed, would it be for both preachers and people, if, in the Conference, there should be found a sufficient number of moderate and prudent men, who should have wisdom and foresight to perceive their true interests; such men would soon discover, that these interests were not to be secured by desperate conflicts with the people for dominion and power, nor by adopting the crooked and questionable policy of ambitious factions. They would feel that their safety and their honour lay, in declaring at once the absolute independence of the local authorities (lawfully assembled, with the superintendent at their head), in all local affairs; and in renouncing for ever, on the part of the Conference, all power and authority, save what is secured to them by the chapel deeds, and by Mr. Wesley's Deed of Declaration of the 28th of February, 1784. The powers of the Conference could then never be disputed, and they would be amply sufficient for all purposes of the Itinerant system.

II. We proceed to notice, in the *second* place, the *claims* of this special district meeting, in respect to its authority and jurisdiction. In preferring these claims, the persons composing the meeting appear to be as little encumbered with moderation as with modesty.

*First*.—Their **POWERS**, during the intervals of Conference, are **ABSOLUTE**. They "*consider themselves to be invested with full powers to decide and act, as to them may seem right and necessary.*"

*Second*.—Their **JURISDICTION** is as **SUPREME** and **UNIVERSAL**, as their powers are absolute. It extends over all,—"*by whomsoever, and on whatsoever pretexts, our system may have been assailed.*"

Any lawful and respectable tribunal, whether lay or religious, in setting forth its powers and jurisdiction, would have felt itself bound, in honour, to quote with correctness and precision the law by which such powers were vested in them. There was nothing, however, in the Minutes of 1797, nor indeed in any other Minutes of Conference, which conferred on special district meetings the power exercised at Leeds. To have quoted correctly, and fairly to have applied these rules, would have proved to all men, that the Leeds Special District Meeting had no power to interfere in the case, unless it had been necessary to try, remove, or suspend a travelling preacher. Instead, therefore, of

quoting the rules on which they profess to act, they content themselves with selecting from them two or three phrases, which, disjoined from their natural connexion, and utterly perverted as to their proper sense and application, in the genuine rules, may induce the unreflecting to take for granted the following *rhapsody* for the law of Methodism, in relation to special district meetings. It forms the first resolution of the Leeds Special District Meeting, and is as follows :—

“I. That the preachers assembled in this special district meeting, legally called under the authority of the rules of 1797 (Minutes, vol. i. p. 378), consider themselves invested with *full powers* to decide and act, as to them may seem right and necessary, in an extraordinary emergency, such as is now alleged to exist;—with a view to the restoration of peace on Christian and Methodistical principles; and to the preservation of what is vital and fundamental in our economy (by whomsoever and on whatsoever pretexts such vital and fundamental parts of our system may have been assailed); by *inquiring into the affairs* of the two Leeds circuits, ‘*with respect to Methodism* ;’ by ‘*redressing any grievances*’ which shall be proved to exist, and by ‘*settling everything TILL the CONFERENCE*,’ to which, as the supreme and ultimate authority of our Connexion, any parties, belonging to our societies or congregations, have, of course, the right of appeal.”

The above, it is true, does not profess to be a literal quotation of the Minutes of 1797, but as a statement of those regulations, let it be examined, and its real character will presently be discovered.

1. To restore peace upon Christian principles becomes an assembly of Christian ministers at all times. The difficulty seems to have been, to effect so desirable an object, on the principle of Christianity, and on, what this special district meeting deemed, the principles of Methodism combined. There is nothing, however, in the Minutes of the Conference, empowering special district meetings, which calls them to the task; they certainly volunteered the attempt without any authority from the Conference; and they have eminently failed. To usurp men's rights, to trample under foot their privileges, and to impose on them arbitrary and illegal tests and declarations, is rather an odd way of restoring peace. The effect, as might have been anticipated, has been to inflame dissension into division, and to banish peace for many years from the Leeds circuits. But that the Leeds Special District Meeting should pretend that they were invested with the office of peacemakers, or “*legally called*” together for any such purpose, “*under the authority of the rules of 1797*,” is more than we were prepared to expect.

2. Of the same character is the assumption by this special district meeting of the office of guardians and preservers of the Methodist economy. Where is there anything in the rules of 1797, which charges special district meetings with this office? We have already shown that, by the Minutes of 1797, district meetings were *stript of nearly all their powers*—that they had *scarcely any authority remaining*! Are they now, and in defiance of the solemn concessions made to the people in 1797, to be declared the *official preservers* of “what is vital and fundamental in our economy?” If so, let it be honestly done. Let not the Conference of 1797 be charged with the guilt of annulling their own concessions to the people!

3. These high offices and powers the Leeds Special District Meeting assume to themselves, “*in an extraordinary emergency, such as*

is now alleged to exist." Do, then, the rules of 1797 empower special district meetings "*in extraordinary emergencies?*" And do they go on to define the nature of those extraordinary emergencies, so as to enable this district meeting to ascertain, that the emergency at Leeds was of the description contemplated by the rules? Do, in fact, the words "*extraordinary emergency,*" or any words bearing an affinity of meaning, occur in these rules? We have already explained the expression, "*any critical case,*" in the Minute of 1791, and we have fully proved that, by all the rules of Conference, the interference of special district meetings is limited to cases, in which the conduct or appointment of travelling preachers is made the subject of complaint. But, in the rules of 1797, no case whatever is specified, nor any terms whatever employed, to define the cause or condition of interference by special district meetings. What are we to think of this method of perverting rules, for the express purpose of misapplying them?

4. Every part of this first resolution, relative to the powers of the Leeds Special District Meeting, is of the same character. Our review of the rules of Conference, on this subject, convicts them of a total misapplication and perversion of the spirit, design, and object of that entire class of rules. It is with the deepest regret, that we are now compelled to notice a corresponding falsification of even the literal sense and meaning of these rules. Thus, the special district meeting, "legally called, under the authority of the rules of 1797, consider themselves to be invested *with full powers to act and decide as to them may seem right and necessary.*" But strange as it may appear, there is not one iota in the rules of 1797, which, either in so many words, or by implication, conveys any such authority to special district meetings. The words, "*full powers,*" are printed in italics, but there are no such words in the rules. The word "power" occurs once only, in this whole class of rules; and then it is expressly limited to a specific object; "power—to try the chairman,—to suspend him from being a travelling preacher." The corresponding words "authority" and "right," never occur in all these rules, without a similar qualification, limiting their application to a specific object. The same may be observed of the words "*act and decide;*" there are no such words in the rules, nor any words that can be used synonymously. Still less, are there to be found, in those rules, any words or expressions, which authorise special district meetings to act and decide in the affairs of a circuit, "*as to them might seem right and necessary.*" All these phrases have been put together for the occasion, by the Leeds Special District Meeting; they are none of them to be found in the rules of 1797; and they present a double falsification of those rules, in the spirit, and in the letter;—a falsification, without which they could never have been so deplorably perverted and misapplied.

5. This perversion and misapplication is still kept up, even where the phrases, culled from the rules, are correctly transcribed. Thus, the Leeds Special District Meeting claim to themselves the right of inquiry into the affairs of the Leeds circuit; and, quoting the language of the rules of 1797, they again say in their 2nd resolution,—"This meeting will therefore proceed forthwith to institute a careful 'inquiry' into the state of 'affairs' here, 'with respect to Methodism,' for the purposes named in the preceding resolution." But, the right of inquiring into the affairs of any circuit, with respect to Methodism, is, by the rule of 1797, limited expressly *to the President*. The rule gives no authority to the *district meeting* to inquire or



meddle in the affairs of any circuit. Had it done this, it would have contradicted all those other rules of 1797, the object of which was, as we have shown, to reduce the power of district meetings "*to a bare negative*," and to leave them "*hardly any authority remaining*." The language of the rule is clear and express; and its intent and meaning are perfectly obvious. Nothing can be plainer, or more express, as we have before shown, than that the district meeting had nothing to do with the inquiry into the affairs of the people; but, as a district meeting, alone had power to try a preacher, during the intervals of Conference; the President, having executed his inquiry respecting the conduct of a preacher in any circuit, could not grant the contemplated redress without calling a district meeting. Thus, every light in which this rule can be viewed—its spirit and language;—the redress which it contemplates;—the rules with which it stands in connexion;—the character of the times in which it was enacted;—the nature of the disturbances which then agitated the societies, when many preachers were aiming to introduce the Sacrament;—the situation of the Conference itself, "*violently convulsed*;"—the "*sacrifices in respect to authority*," which they found it necessary to make, "*on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers*;"—their distinct recognition of the local authorities;—the surrender to these local authorities, of "*by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority*;"—and "*of the whole management of our temporal concerns*," and this in direct opposition to district meetings, who are stript of all "*authority*," having nothing left "*but a bare negative in general*." Every light, we repeat, in which this rule can be viewed, demonstrates that the great object and design of its enactment and provisions, was the protection of the people against the preachers, by affording them a summary redress of grievances; and that it not only does not authorise, but it discountenances any interference by special district meetings, with the affairs and local jurisdictions of the circuits. Surely the perversion of such a rule, by the Leeds Special District Meeting, is not a light offence! Surely the Conference will not forfeit its public character, and violate its own solemn pledges to the people in 1797, by affording the slightest sanction to so grievous a perversion!

Let it not be said, that this meeting is intermeddling with the affairs of a circuit, with which it has nothing to do. The "*free circulation*" of the "*accredited documents*," was a virtual appeal to "*the more intelligent and influential part of the people*." It is this part of our people who complain, and justly complain, that the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism has been violated, and the rights and privileges of our local authorities and people grossly outraged, by the Leeds Special District Meeting. They ask, and they have a right to ask, "Did Mr. Stephens, the President, go to Leeds for any purpose, or in any spirit, contemplated by the rule? Did he (not the district meeting, but did he, the President) institute any inquiry at all into the "*grievances*" of the people? Did he, when he found (what is not anywhere denied) that, up to the last Conference, the great majority of the leaders and local preachers had been opposed to the introduction of an organ into the Brunswick Chapel; and that, subsequently, the great "*grievance*," of which they complained, was the leave granted by the last Conference to erect such organ, in opposition to the decision of the previous district meeting, their own law of 1820, and such declared and strenuous opposition of the local

authorities, did he then take any steps to inquire into this matter ; to find out the plots and schemes (if any) of those preachers, by which the minority in favour of the organ had effected their object with the Conference?—and did he take any steps whatever to redress this “*grievance*” of which the majority complained? Again, when he found that a great body of local preachers and leaders had been roused to indignant opposition and rebellion, by the irregular and illegal suspension of a local preacher, did he (the President) inquire into this affair? Did he summon Mr. Grindrod to account for this arbitrary and illegal exercise of authority? Did he annul the suspension, and afford the accused local preacher the means of a fair trial?—in short, did he take any steps whatever to “*redress*” this particular “*grievance*?” On the contrary, is it not manifest, that Mr. Stephens, with other preachers, assembled at Leeds for the express purpose of supporting a minority against a majority ; by maintaining, defending, and enforcing all that had been done there in relation to the organ? And do not all their proceedings, as set forth in these “*accredited documents*,” exhibit, on the part of this special district meeting, a full determination of either beating down the majority into a tame submission, or else compelling them to quit the society? Can any man for a moment deny, that this special district meeting inquired, not into the “*grievances*” of this majority ; but into the irregular means which, for want of better, they had adopted to obtain redress?—and do not their resolutions teem with vituperation and abuse, founded upon the *conduct*, not the *grievances* of the people,—conduct, which this meeting does not intend to palliate or defend, and which is, in many respects, to be deeply deplored ; but into which the people of Leeds would never have been betrayed, had they not first been improperly treated? We are hence led, in the *third* place, to review, more specifically, some parts of the *conduct* of the Leeds Special District Meeting.

III. This meeting regrets the length to which the present Address is necessarily extended, but there are specific acts, in the *conduct* of the Leeds Special District Meeting, which involve considerations too important to be overlooked.

Perhaps one of the clearest and strongest proofs, that a special district meeting has no power and lawful jurisdiction in the affairs of the people, is to be found in the total absence of all power, within itself, either to compel an appearance of the accused, to enforce the attendance of witnesses, or to carry into effect its own decisions. Had the Leeds Special District Meeting been left to itself, had it exercised no powers but such as belong to such meetings, it might have entertained charges against a travelling preacher with effect ; and, having decided on the case, it might have enforced its decision ; but as against the people, as against any individual, not a member of their own body, what class of powers do special district meetings possess? The course taken by the Leeds Special District Meeting demonstrates, that within itself that meeting had no powers applicable to the case. It would naturally be expected, that, on assembling, this special district meeting would have called on the complaining party to name the accused, and to prefer his charges. When A. and B. had been accused, one would have supposed that a summons should have issued to compel their appearance and answer to the charges preferred. But A. and B., aware that, by the rules of 1797, they could not be expelled the society, or suspended from office, except at a leaders’

meeting, would probably have remained at home, smiling at the impotency of special district meetings. What was to be done in a case, which the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism, not only had never contemplated, but which, by the concessions of 1797, it had virtually forbidden, and for which, therefore, it had made no provision?

The answer to this question, as practically given in the "accredited document," opens a scene, not only new in Methodism, but which, if at all admissible, must overturn the foundation of any constitution, and would reduce the government, of either nation or church, to simple and unauthorised despotism. The Leeds Special District Meeting were driven to an alternative, which, had their assembling together been founded on mistake,—had there been no determination to deal with the case, right or wrong,—*with or without law*,—must have opened their eyes. This alternative was, either to declare that they had no jurisdiction or powers applicable to the case, or else boldly to seize upon the powers of the local jurisdictions and authorities, which alone could be adapted to the circumstances.

1st. The Leeds Special District Meeting chose the latter of the above alternatives; and herein lay their *first* great and serious violation of the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism. Without a shadow of pretence in law or conscience, they have usurped the powers of the two superintendents of the Leeds circuits. The superintendent alone has power to assemble the leaders and local preachers of his circuit; but the Leeds Special District Meeting appoint, "to meet" the leaders and local preachers of the two Leeds circuits, separately, on the respective times mentioned in their second resolution. They do more, they reduce the superintendents themselves to a state of subjection, they address them in the language of authority,—they neither advise nor request; but they "*direct the superintendents*," as in their third resolution;—they employ them as subordinate officers of this novel tribunal, to issue their summonses and serve their notices; and, however unconstitutional and illegal the character of these summonses, it is clear, that the superintendents felt themselves bound to implicit obedience, not, indeed, by any law, but by an influence they ought to have spurned.

That this surrender of authority was *voluntarily* made on the part of the superintendents, does but aggravate the case, so far as the people are concerned, by giving it the character of a "*combination*" against their rights, by the parties who, of all others, were most solemnly bound to protect those rights. The relation of pastor and people is one of mutual support, protection, and defence. That superintendent, therefore, who could timidly or servilely deliver up the powers of his office into the hands of a special district meeting, and consent to become their tool, betrayed his trust, and proved himself unworthy of his office. On receiving their first "*direction*," he ought to have boldly replied, "I called you together, in the hope that you were possessed of powers to heal the breaches, and reconcile the differences, between my people and myself. I now find that, instead of displaying any such powers, all you propose is, the usurpation of those which belong to my office as the superintendent. It would be treasonable in me to surrender those powers into your hands; and especially as the first use you would make of them,—the first *command* you have issued, calls upon me to perform an illegal and unconstitutional act. I have power, as superintendent of this circuit, to



assemble the leaders' and local preachers' meetings, whenever I think it necessary ; but I have no power to summon those meetings to meet a special district meeting, nor to introduce into them, when assembled, any persons, whether preachers or others, who are not regular members thereof." But, alas! for the people, they had no longer any superintendent! Their *chief-pastors* had virtually renounced their office, by surrendering their powers into the hands of a special district meeting, and receiving their "*directions.*"

2nd. Having now possessed themselves of the powers of the superintendent, the next step, the *second* great and serious violation of the Methodist constitution, was the seizure of the power and jurisdiction of the leaders' and local preachers' meetings.

It was for this purpose that the illegal summonses were issued, and with a haste, and brevity of notice, which should leave the real friends of Methodism no time for consideration, and no opportunity to adopt any measures for the defence of the constitution, and concessions of 1797. The special district meeting assembled on the 4th of December, and resolved "*to meet all the leaders of the town society in Leeds East,*" on the same evening. This would have been impracticable; the few hours of interval being insufficient to afford an opportunity of summoning the leaders. But Mr. Grindrod had kindly provided for this emergency, by giving the notice at the usual leaders' meeting, *on the preceding evening.* This fact, stated in the accredited document, lets us into a secret, viz., that there were individuals who knew what course the special district meeting would adopt, *before that meeting had assembled*; a secret party, who had prepared things before hand, and who were so confident of carrying through their illegal and unconstitutional measures, that they began to act upon them before the district meeting could assemble. Much is said in the "*accredited document,*" about "*combinations,*" "*avowed combinations;*" but it is these *secret* combinations, which are *not avowed*, but are so powerfully felt, that inflict the deepest wounds on the Methodist constitution, and prove so destructive of the liberties of the church!

The summons addressed to the leaders' meeting, to meet the special district meeting, was treated as might have been expected in the divided state of the society. The party which had hitherto been the *minority in favour of the organ*, conscious that the district preachers, with their official advisers and assistants, had assembled to support their cause, and give them the victory over their brethren; instead of making any stand for their independence and rights as leaders, instantly obeyed the summons. They thereby betrayed Methodism, and surrendered their independence, as men and as leaders. The greater part of the leaders "*who felt themselves aggrieved,*" and who had hitherto constituted *the majority against the organ*, took a constitutional ground, and refused to assemble and deliberate as a leaders' meeting, in the presence of a district meeting. There was not only no law to require them so to assemble, but reason and the nature of things, common sense and the usage of Methodism, justified their refusal. How could the deliberation of a leaders' meeting be regarded as free, or their decisions as valid, while under the influence, the intimidation, and moral restraint of so great a number of preachers? How, under such circumstances, could any meeting preserve, or successfully defend, either their own rights and privileges, or those of the society, with which they were entrusted?

It is these *strong facts*, viz., that the preachers of a district were present, interfering with and influencing the deliberations and decisions of the leaders' meeting at Leeds; and that those who had hitherto constituted the majority in this meeting could not attend without violating the constitution of Methodism; it is these facts, we repeat, which, in the judgment of this meeting, render absolutely null and void every such decision, and every act and proceeding founded thereon. We undertake not to defend this majority—many of their proceedings were, doubtless, irregular; but, whatever their sins might be, they have been expelled by an incompetent and unlawful authority; and, however irregular in other respects, their protest against these proceedings rests on *constitutional* and *valid* grounds.

Painful and distressing as this subject must be, to every friend of constitutional order and good government in the church, it cannot but be serviceable to the cause of Methodism, to review the steps by which a district meeting, stripped of all authority in 1797, was enabled, in 1827, to assume powers so alarming; to substitute their own will and pleasure for the law and constitution of Methodism; and to beat down all opposition.

1. By taking part with those leaders, who had hitherto formed, confessedly, a *minority* in favour of an organ, they overturned the constitutional principle, that the minority shall be concluded and bound by the decision of the majority in the leaders' meeting.

2. By summoning the leaders to meet them, they afforded an opportunity for this minority, and for all those who had hitherto adhered to the majority on the organ question, but who were now moved by persuasion or fear, to come over to them—they thus divided the leaders' meeting, and erected the standard of revolt.

3. By proceeding to act with this minority, and its new adherents, *as with a leaders' meeting*, and treating all those who constitutionally opposed this unlawful combination as already expelled, they, in fact, destroyed the regular leaders' meeting of the circuit.

4. The new adherents to this organ minority, having so recently changed sides, were not easily to be trusted; a plausible declaration, containing "*pledges of moral and Methodistical qualification*," is, therefore, drawn up, and submitted to this new institution, before it can be allowed to display the attributes, and exercise the prerogatives, of a leaders' meeting. In ordinary circumstances, there might be nothing in these pledges to which a leader would object; but, in the present crisis, and under existing circumstances, it is plain to every man of common sense, that the declaration, thus exacted, was a pledge of adherence—not, as professed, to the constitution of Methodism, but—to whatever should be enjoined and dictated by the special district meeting. Such measures are not usual in the church of God, and they are seldom resorted to, except to bind men down to a party. In the present instance, it was avowedly intended to fix those who should be won over from the *majority*. It was a matter of great emergency; and, therefore, the district meeting puts forth all its authority;—it addresses the leaders in the same terms of authority and command, as it had previously addressed the superintendent. It "*directs*" and "*imperatively requires*" that no leader shall be allowed to vote in any trials for violations of discipline, or to take part, as a leader, in the administration of our church government, so long as he refuses these pledges. The plain English of all this is, that no man should

be a leader, unless he would consent to retain or purchase office by submission to this special district meeting.

5. The meeting thus substituted for the regular leaders' meeting, becomes in fact the mere machine and agent of those who set it up. *All its measures must be regarded as the measures of the district meeting*, and herein lay their power over individuals. They could now try, censure, and expel, whom they pleased, and for whatever offence they thought proper; the special district meeting was, *in fact*, become the leaders' meeting. And it is lamentable to add, that this state of things is still in operation at Leeds. The special district meeting is not yet dissolved; it has merely adjourned, and may be called together at any moment. Thus, then, we have now a circuit under the regular government of a special district meeting, which "*directs*" both the superintendent and the leaders' meeting, and holds them in subjection. Every prudent and sensible man naturally asks, "Where is the law for all this? and how long will the dread of injuring Methodism, and disturbing the church, induce our people to submit to such proceedings?"

But it was not only individuals that were to be reduced to subjection; the public mind was to be prepared for this great and fundamental change in the constitution of Methodism, and reconciled to the new order of things. This was the first great and general attempt to systematise and consolidate the *judicial* power of special district meetings, *in local affairs*. It was necessary, therefore, to present it to the public in a shape somewhat imposing. For this purpose they favour us with a string of printed resolutions, in which they set forth their claims and proceedings, with notes, argumentative and explanatory, as an admirable precedent for all future special district meetings. In addition to the remarks we have made upon this singular document, we may add, that it has the following characteristics:—

1. Placing all the right of interference by a special district meeting in what is termed an extraordinary emergency (and which may mean almost anything), it sounds the *tocsin*, and sends forth a cry of loud alarm, "*The church is in danger!*" Whether the church were really in danger, from the causes they enumerate, this meeting, not choosing to enter into the Leeds quarrel, but only to comment on the accredited documents, cannot determine; but we are sure the church is very much endangered by the proceedings of this special district meeting, and has already lost about 1,000 members thereby.

2. It deals out unmeasured praise and approbation of all the members and the measures of the special district meeting, and their adherents. Everything, on this side of the question, is extolled from the beginning;—the organ party, the trustees, the preachers, all are right;—there is nothing to blame, nothing to correct;—all is praiseworthy, and entitled to gratitude and thanks. With the many handsome things which these gentlemen choose to say of one another, in their complimentary resolutions, and the modesty with which one chairman, having carried votes of commendation and thanks to all around him, vacates his seat, that another may step into it, and procure for him the like gratulations, we have nothing to do. We wish, however, to see the gross flattery of this system, so recently and generally introduced amongst us, banished from the church of God!

3. It traduces and defames all who stand in opposition to the measures of this special district meeting, and to the organ. It was

not enough that the engine of a newly-modelled leaders' meeting was played off against their adversaries, but, in these defamatory resolutions, whole bodies of men are accused of "insurrectionary measures against Methodism," without the troublesome preliminary of preferring distinct charges against separate individuals. Ample amusement is now afforded for the idle and the curious, to apply, as their fancy shall direct, certain epithets with which these resolutions are stained; and they may, at leisure, set one another down as convicted of "*a cavilling and factious spirit,—of gross and shocking disregard of all truth and frankness,—of indecent contempt of their seniors and superiors,—of incredible ignorance,—of evasion,—deceit,—treachery,—and rebellion.*"

The wise and virtuous, in all ages, have reprobated this practice of heaping together criminatory charges against whole bodies of men, without discrimination, without evidence, and without even naming the accused. It is true, we are told, at the close of the statement, of evils alleged to exist in the town society of the Leeds East Circuit, given under the 5th resolution, that "the truth of this statement had been proved in the presence of the special district meeting, by the clearest evidence of the facts, or by the admissions of some of the parties implicated. To the greater portion of these allegations no denial was even attempted." But what sort of *evidence* is this? It is admitted, in the note following the third resolution, that "the greater part of the leaders who professed themselves aggrieved" (and who are the party thus abused), "absented themselves from the meeting." All the "*evidence*" was therefore *ex parte*, furnished, doubtless, by the organ minority, who thus avenge themselves of the absent majority. As to "*denial*," none, of course, could be given by those who were not present; and as to the "*admissions of some of the parties implicated*," it is clear that these admissions came from those whom the presence and conduct of the special district meeting had terrified into submission; and whose admissions, therefore, are entitled to no consideration. Of the *motives* of this determined attack on the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism, we should not wish to speak; but we venture to assure the Conference, that this is not the way in which the church of God either *can* or *ought* to be governed. Indeed, the men who have thus exposed the skirts of Methodism to the world, appear not to have reflected, that those pastors who bring sweeping accusations against the church of God, place themselves in a critical situation. Our local preachers and leaders are selected for their talents, their piety, and usefulness. These, alone, are the considerations which can distinguish men in religious society. Can the great majority of such men, who have spent their labour, their influence, their talent, and, many of them, their best days, in building up Methodism, wish, all at once, to pull down the edifice they have reared?—Can the church of God ever wish to destroy herself?—If, then, the President establish his case, he proves too much; and the statement can, in that event, only be taken as the acknowledgment of a misrule, which has excited a spirit of resistance, and driven some of the best and most useful servants of God, and of Methodism, to a high pitch of desperation.

3rd. We have complained, in the *last* place, that the special district meeting assembled at Leeds, usurped to itself the right of giving laws to the Connexion, and of enacting new tests and declarations, to be taken and subscribed by our people. A leader, on his

appointment to office, attends the leaders' meeting, for the purpose of being examined; and then, in the presence of the leaders' meeting, he gives those "*moral and Methodistical pledges*," which are deemed necessary to qualify him for his office. From the moment a leader is thus appointed, he has all the rights which pertain to his office;—he is entitled to vote in all trials for violations of discipline, and to take part, as a leader, in the administration of our church government;—and he cannot, by the constitution of Methodism, and particularly by the concessions of 1797, be debarred these rights, or removed, or suspended from office, until convicted of some offence, moral or Methodistical, at the regular leaders' meeting.

In opposition to this fundamental law of the Connexion, the Leeds Special District Meeting think proper to exact new pledges from the leaders, and to prescribe to them a new declaration of fidelity. And, in the plenitude of their *full powers*, they enact, "That no leader shall be allowed to vote in any trials which may take place for violations of discipline, or to take part, as a leader, in the administration of our church government, so long as he continues to refuse these reasonable and necessary pledges of his moral and Methodistical qualifications."

The effect of this new law is, to exclude every leader from his office, who may feel a constitutional objection to have new pledges exacted from him, by a special district meeting; and when no charges of any kind can be brought against him, but simply his refusal to submit to an authority he ought never, as a leader, to acknowledge.

The design of these new pledges, as we have before shown, was not to bind men to the constitution of Methodism, but to submission to the special district meeting. And we have a further proof of the party purpose for which they were framed, in the arbitrary spirit in which they are enforced; and which sets down all who demur, whether justly or not, as "*accomplices*" and "*fellow transgressors*" with the guilty, and as "*persisting in their transgressions of law*."

The reason assigned for this overthrow of the fundamental law, and usurpation of the legislative power of the Connexion, is, when stated as a general maxim, plausible enough; but it is false as applied to the case in hand; viz., "because all the functionaries of any government, should ever be ready to profess, with sincerity and decision, their adherence to the general principle on which that government is founded." This is true as a general maxim, but it implies that the government, of which the individuals are functionaries, requires such professions. The regular leaders' meeting at Leeds might, at any time, have required such pledges from its members; but that *regular and lawful* leaders' meeting had been broken up, by the illegal intervention of a special district meeting, and had *never* required any such pledges. The demand for these pledges, therefore, comes from the special district meeting, who were now forming a *new* leaders' meeting, and who resorted to these pledges to strengthen their own newly acquired and very questionable powers. But, by the constitution of Methodism, special district meetings have no right or authority to exact pledges of any description, from any of the functionaries of our government, except from the members of their own body.

It is of the manner in which these *dicta* of the special district meeting, founded on fallacious reasonings, and not on any recognised authority or principle, are enforced on us as law, and often to the overthrow of the established laws of the Connexion, that this meeting



complains. Whilst this system is permitted, no man can esteem himself safe. He may have his character traduced, be expelled from religious society, and be ruined, by any faction which may spring up amongst the preachers, and whose measures he may deem it his duty to oppose. In the resolutions of the Leeds Special District Meeting, we have many instances of the manner in which they are disposed to deal with the laws of Methodism; and the flimsy reasoning, on which they set up their own maxims and decisions, in opposition to these laws. We shall select two instances, as relating to points which, in the preceding part of this Address, we have taken for granted, but on which a few remarks may be serviceable. The *first* relates to the law of 1820, relative to organs. The *second* to the suspension of Mr. Johnson, the local preacher, by the Superintendent of the Leeds Circuit.

#### 1. ON THE RULE OF 1820, RELATIVE TO ORGANS.

The rule of 1820, after declaring that organs may be allowed by special consent of the Conference, proceeds to enact, that "every application for such consent shall be first made at the district meeting, and, if it obtain their sanction, shall be then referred to a committee of the Conference."

In human language, nothing can be more clear, more definite, and express, than the above clause. To argue, that, from the letter of this rule, any application for an organ could be referred to a committee of the Conference, until such application had *first* received the sanction of the district meeting, would be an utter absurdity.

The spirit and design of the rule is in perfect unison with the letter. Organs are identified, in the minds of many of our people, with the service of the Church of England; and are, in general, demanded by what is termed the *church party* among us. In this respect organs differ from other instruments of music used in our chapels; and, as was the case in former years with the Sacrament, and, more recently, with the attempt to introduce the Liturgy at Sheffield, so organs can seldom be erected in our chapels, without endangering the peace of our societies, amongst whom we have many Dissenters in principle. The design of the rule, therefore, was to allow the introduction of organs where generally desired by the people, but to check applications from parties who might not have with them the general sense and approbation of the Society. For this purpose the *special consent* of Conference is necessary to the erection of an organ; but, in order to observe such consent, the parties are compelled to procure, *first*, the sanction of the district meeting to their application. The district meeting, being composed of preachers stationed in the neighbourhood, could best judge, from local information and knowledge, whether the organ might be safely introduced, without endangering the peace of the society. If, therefore, language and laws are capable of definite meaning, this rule of 1820, in spirit, design, and language, imposes, and *was intended to impose*, a salutary check on applications for the consent of the Conference to the erection of organs, by prohibiting such applications until the sanction of those possessed of local information had been first obtained.

The special district meeting, in their zeal to defend the Conference against the charge of having violated this rule, by their consent to the erection of an organ in Brunswick Chapel, at Leeds, can find no other defence than to attack the rule. "There is," say they, "an undesigned ambiguity and want of explanatory amplification in the rule."

The emendation and *amplification* which the special district meeting graft on the rule, is to allow an application to the Conference, whether the district meeting will sanction the application or not. Thus a rule, clear and explicit in itself, is thrown into utter confusion, and becomes a positive absurdity. Where were the sense of a rule, which sends the applicants to the district meeting, *for leave to apply* to the Conference, and tells them, at the same time, that the Conference will receive their application *without any such leave*?

The reasoning of the special district meeting on this subject, is a fair specimen of that which runs through all these accredited documents; and it is such as compels us to presume, that they had a very mean opinion of the understandings of the Methodist public. Take a few specimens:—"The district meeting in May, though it refused its own approving sanction to the application, did explicitly allow of that appeal; its own decision to disapprove was, therefore, accompanied with, and limited by, another decision, viz., to *allow an appeal*." Here is a mere play upon the words, "application" and "appeal." But the appeal was an application!—this grand argument, therefore, amounts to this, viz., "Though it *refused* its own *approving sanction* to the application, yet it did *explicitly allow* an application." As for the word "appeal," it has nothing to do with the subject or the rule. Appeals do not lie in cases of mere consent. The introduction of this word, and the fine flourish about the right of our people to appeal, tends admirably to confuse the question; but the rule relates to the "*special consent* of the Conference." For that consent, application to the Conference was to be made; but such application was not to be made, *without the sanction* of the district meeting, who were to say "Yea," or "Nay," to the application. What have appeals (which relate to judicial decisions) to do with a case like this? Besides, by what law of the Connexion are special district meetings empowered to grant appeals? In one part of this singular train of reasoning, appeals to the Conference are the "*unquestionable and fundamental right of all our people*; to abolish or abridge which, would at once prove the tyranny of the Conference;" in another part, appeals are derived from the "explicit allowance" of a special district meeting,—into such absurdities do men fall, who undertake to defend what is palpably wrong.

Again, the district meeting argue, "If it were possible that the Conference could have designed, by the clause in the law of 1820, to abolish or abridge the right of those bodies to appeal to it, for advice, protection, or redress, whenever they deemed such appeal to be necessary; and to constitute a mere district committee the final and absolute judges of a question, in which the interests and wishes of respectable trustees might be involved, such a design would at once prove the tyranny of the Conference over those whom it is bound to protect."

The above quotation is either a piece of general and unmeaning declamation, having no bearing on the case; or, if intended to apply at all to the application for an organ, it will read thus: "If it were possible that the Conference could have designed to abridge the right of those bodies, to apply to it for consent to erect organs, whenever they deemed such application to be necessary, and to constitute a mere district committee of its own body absolutely necessary sanctioning parties to such applications, in which the interests and wishes of

responsible trustees might be involved, such a design would at once prove the tyranny of the Conference," &c. Now, all this, the Conference did really design and enact; and, therefore, we have the Conference convicted of tyranny on the hypothesis of its own district committee. Whilst on this subject, we shall beg leave to remark, that previously to the erection of an organ in any of our chapels, the consent of three separate parties is absolutely necessary.

1. The consent of the trustees, who hold the property in trust, and are responsible for the chapel debts.

2. The consent of the Conference, to whose use and enjoyment the pulpit is secured by the trust deed of the chapel.

3. The consent of the society, for whose use the chapel is built; and whose consent can only be *Methodistically* obtained by the vote of the leaders' meeting.

We, indeed, are not amongst those who complain of the violation of the law of 1820. The Conference, like all other consenting parties, has a right to prescribe on what terms its consent shall be given; if they do not complain that their consent has been improperly obtained, we should be sorry to do so. But the great mistake lies in supposing that the consent of the Conference, with that of the trustees, is sufficient; and that the consent of the leaders' meeting, and stewards of the society, is not necessary to the creation of an organ. The parties who fall into this mistake, are not aware that the leaders' meeting and stewards of the society, are as distinctly recognised in the trust deeds of the chapels, and their rights as legally vested, as are those of the Conference or of the trustees themselves. The declaration of trust, sanctioned by the Conference, after referring to the Plan of Pacification, in the Minutes of Conference of 1795, adds, "which rules shall also regulate all alterations as to the times or additions of public worship in the said chapel." (See Warren's "Digest," p. 240.) The purport of this clause, in the Conference Form of Trust, is to place all *alterations* and *additions* of public worship, upon the same footing as the introduction of the *Sacrament* is placed on, by the Plan of Pacification; which is, that "except a majority of the stewards and leaders testify in writing to the Conference, that they are persuaded that no separation will be made thereby, they will not allow it." (See Art. 1 of the Addenda to the Plan of Pacification.)

Thus we have proved, not only that the stewards and leaders are a necessary consenting party to the erection of an organ in a Methodist Chapel, as an "addition to public worship;" but that, by the trust deeds of the chapels, and the Plan of Pacification, such consent of the majority of the stewards and leaders must be testified "in writing" to the Conference.

In the Leeds case, the majority of the leaders' meeting were to the last decidedly opposed to the erection of an organ. The Conference had no testimonial from this majority, either verbally or in writing, when they gave their consent; on the contrary, the leaders sent a deputation to the Conference to oppose the granting of such consent. Effects naturally follow causes. The Conference, in giving such consent, not only violated their own rule of 1820; but they also violated the trust deeds of the chapels, and the Plan of Pacification. The effects of this proceeding rapidly followed:—first, disaffection and lawless proceedings, by those who felt themselves aggrieved; secondly a still more lawless special district meeting; and last of all, what all these rules and regulations were intended to prevent, and which, had



the testimonial in writing been required, would have been prevented a separation of 1,000 members from the society!

The next time the Conference are called upon to grant their "special consent" to erect an organ in a Methodist chapel, they will probably deem it prudent to require the testimonial "in writing," from "a majority of the stewards and leaders, that no separation will be made thereby."

## 2. ON THE SUSPENSION OF MR. M. JOHNSON.

Another point, which we have taken for granted in the former part of this Address, and on which we are favoured with a further sample of the flimsy and fallacious reasoning, on which the Leeds Special District Meeting presume to set up their *dogmas*, in opposition to the established and settled laws of the Connexion, is the illegal and unconstitutional suspension of Mr. Matthew Johnson, from his office of a local preacher. Let it be observed, however, that we do not undertake to defend Mr. Johnson; we know nothing of his case; all we are concerned with is, the illegality of his suspension;—on this point, we make the following extracts from the exposition appended to the ninth resolution of the special district meeting:—

"This charge was met by Mr. Johnson, not by any denial of its truth, nor by a demand of proof, nor by the slightest intimation of a wish for further time to prepare his defence; but by a declaration that it gave him great pleasure to be so accused, as it afforded him an opportunity of expressing his mind on that subject, by a bold admission of the facts charged; accompanied by emphatic declarations that he rejoiced in what he had done; and by an assurance, that he would take the same steps again under similar circumstances.

"After attempting, in vain, to induce Mr. Johnson to retract these sentiments, to confess his misconduct, and to promise not, in future, to repeat it, the superintendent, at length, proceeded to pronounce, officially, Mr. Johnson's suspension from his office, as a local preacher, for three months.

"On this case the district meeting unanimously judges!" (by what law they undertake to judge in such a case is not stated!)

1. "That Mr. Grindrod, in passing sentence on Mr. Johnson's case, violated no law; but, on the contrary, acted in strict conformity with his pastoral right and duties, as recognised by our long established system and usages.

"If there had been any doubt of the truth of the charges, he might have asked the meeting its opinion on that point, but there was not, even in Mr. Johnson's own mouth, a plea of 'not guilty.' No issue was joined,—there was nothing that admitted of inquiry,—the truth of the charge was declared by the party charged; and nothing regularly remained, but to pronounce the sentence, which is, according to our system, and to all analogy, the province of the superintendent."

This last appeal to *analogy*, is most unfortunate for this very confident piece of argumentation. The humanity of British law always interposes between the accused and the judge. If a prisoner plead "not guilty," he cannot be sentenced until a verdict has been obtained against him. If he plead "guilty," still he cannot be sentenced until his plea has been duly and regularly recorded, by the court which has power to try him. The present case was the trial of a man, not by a jury, but by his peers; a distinction which neither Mr. Grindrod, nor the special district meeting, seem to understand. His brethren, the local preachers, constituted the court which alone had power to try

him; and, until this court had recorded his guilt, either on his own plea of "guilty," or on its own "finding," no sentence could be passed upon him. Did, then, this court so record the guilt of Mr. Johnson? It is manifest that they did not! On the contrary, well knowing that what Mr. Johnson had done, he had done with their sanction and concurrence, *they*, who only had right to pronounce upon his case, admitted a very different plea, and "found no fault in him;" and, when Mr. Grindrod proceeded, most irregularly and unconstitutionally, to sentence the accused, without any record of guilt, the meeting broke up in confusion, and the great majority of the local preachers threw up their plans. The meeting, in all probability, felt that it was unmanly and cowardly to attack an individual, for an offence of which all were equally guilty.

But did Mr. Johnson plead "guilty?" He admitted the facts charged; but then he pleaded a "justification" of those facts. Mr. Grindrod attempted, "in vain, to induce" him "to confess his misconduct." So far from admitting that these facts involved guilt, he "rejoiced in what he had done." He thought himself at liberty to repeat the same line of conduct, and assured the meeting, "that he would take the same steps again under similar circumstances." This plea, *admitting and justifying facts*, is anything but a plea of "guilty." By any court of the country, civil or ecclesiastical, it would have been deemed a plea of "not guilty." Whether Mr. Johnson could have maintained his plea of justification, would have been for his peers to determine, had they been permitted to try him. Much might have been said in support of it, which, probably, never yet struck the mind of the superintendent, or the district meeting. It is not our business, however, to make out a case for Mr. Johnson. Whether he were innocent or guilty, our point is made out, on the *showing* of the special district meeting; viz., that he was *illegally* and *unconstitutionally* suspended; first,—because he did not, as alleged, plead "guilty," but he pleaded a justification; and secondly,—because, if he had pleaded "guilty," such plea was never recorded by the court, which alone had power to try the accused, or to receive his plea; and, therefore, no sentence could be lawfully passed upon him.

In conclusion, we beg leave to remind the Conference of a remark made by one of their most venerable and distinguished members, viz., that "there never was a genuine work of God, which took general effect in the earth, but a beast has arisen out of it." What this beast is, we need not explain; but we dread its appearance in Wesleyan Methodism. The object of this Address being to support and preserve the constitution of Methodism, we have carefully abstained from any unnecessary remarks on the powers of the Conference itself. Whatever some individuals may think, however, of Mr. Wesley's Deed of Declaration, and of the hold which the Conference have on the chapels, by the deeds of trust, the Conference may rest assured that their powers have but one foundation; all other props will be vain, if they should sink in the opinion of the religious public. The hold on the chapels will slide away, as the estate of an insolvent man passes into the hands of his creditors. Whatever, therefore, the powers of the Conference may be, they certainly are not safe in the hands of special district meetings. The public display of these powers in hostile array against the people—the rendering of them the subject of public discussion and angry debate—and, above all, the exercising them in such

a manner, as to awaken the sympathies of the whole Connexion in favour of 1,000 sufferers, who, to say the very least, have on some points been ill-used, can never tend to increase or preserve these powers. The fundamental principles of our constitution are understood by comparatively few even of our own members. Our people, simple and happy in their simplicity, are in general minding better things. We deprecate everything which tends unnecessarily to awaken their attention to such subjects. The less they hear of the power of the Conference and of special district meetings, the better will it be both for the Conference and for themselves. But, assuredly, the repetition of such scenes as have transpired at Leeds, will rouse a class of men, who have the means of obtaining knowledge, and who will know, better than the Leeds people have done, how to defend their rights in a proper manner. The Conference may then have to examine the foundations of its power, and to arm themselves for its defence, when it is too late; and when peace can only be obtained, by giving up more than they will know how to concede with a good grace, or than it would be to the advantage of Methodism to take from them.

This Meeting, therefore, most earnestly entreats the Conference to stop the progress of so great an evil, whilst it may be done,—to restore to the people the concessions of 1797,—to forbid all future interference by special district meetings in local affairs, or with the local authorities,—and, in particular, to put an end, once and for ever, to all pretensions, on the part of such meetings, to any inquisitorial and judicial power over the local officers and members of society. They will thus prove to the Methodist societies the sincerity of the following declaration in their Annual Address to the societies for the year 1827:—"At no former period, indeed, were we more fully resolved to adhere to the doctrine and discipline established among us, or more determined to 'walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing,' than during the sittings of this Conference." (Minutes, 1827, page 96.)

Signed on behalf and by order of the Quarterly Meeting,

THOMAS FARMER, }  
THOMAS FRID, } Circuit Stewards.

SOUTHWARK, July 8th, 1828.

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RESOLUTIONS OF THE TRUSTEES, STEWARDS, LOCAL PREACHERS, AND LEADERS OF THE SOUTH LONDON CIRCUIT, ON THE REJECTION OF THE ADDRESS OF THE CIRCUIT TO THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONFERENCE, HELD IN LONDON, JULY 30, 1828.

WE, the undersigned Trustees, Stewards, Local Preachers, and Leaders of the Wesleyan Methodist Societies, and Members of the Quarterly Meeting of the London South Circuit, after mature deliberation, have entered into the following resolutions:—

I. That the concessions made by Conference to the trustees and other principal friends of the Methodist Connexion, assembled at Leeds in the year 1797, formed a solemn compact between the Conference and the people; and constituted the fundamental basis of that constitution, under which the Conference has been permitted to exer-

cise its authority, and has received the countenance and support of the Methodist societies.

II. That the approbation of the late Conference to the proceedings and resolutions of the special district meeting which assembled at Leeds, on Tuesday, the 4th December, 1827, was a most unprovoked infringement of that constitution, and a deliberate reassumption by the Conference of those antichristian and unreasonable powers, of which they had so solemnly divested themselves in 1797.

III. That after so deliberate a violation of faith and treaty, we, the undersigned, are not surprised at the rejection of the address of this circuit by the late Conference; inasmuch as it is difficult to conceive how the dominant party in the Conference could have managed a discussion on a case which was too clearly made out, and too well sustained, to admit of any satisfactory reply; and the only rational conclusion of which discussion must have been, the condemnation of themselves and their proceedings at Leeds.

IV. That we are, however, surprised that the Conference should have had so little regard for its own character, as to assign, for the rejection of that address, reasons, which they must have known at the time to be both frivolous and unfounded: and we feel ourselves called upon to remark,—

1. That the Conference well knew that the proposition for printing the address was withdrawn at the quarterly meeting, and that it was printed without the concurrence of the meeting, by individuals over whom that meeting had no control. To reject the address, therefore, on the ground that it was so *printed*, was gross and palpable injustice!
2. That if the address *had* been printed by order of the quarterly meeting, it would have furnished but a frivolous pretext for its rejection; because the resolutions of the Leeds Special District Meeting had been printed and circulated in this circuit, on the recommendation of the Rev. John Stephens, the then President of the Conference; and it was as an answer and antidote to that most mischievous publication, that the address was drawn up. To reject the address, therefore, because it was printed, and at the same time to approve the *printed* resolutions which called it forth, was a very striking illustration of the equity of the Methodist Conference.
3. That the address of this circuit does not contain any "charges of a calumnious nature, founded on false reasonings respecting a case, with the real facts of which the meeting were unacquainted." But, on the contrary, as the Conference well knew, the address is founded solely on the *facts* stated by the parties charged; and confines its notice to the "accredited documents" put forth by these parties in their own justification. Nor could the quarterly meeting be *uninformed* on the case, or at any loss to express, with justice and propriety, a *positive opinion* thereon; inasmuch as the address was not drawn up until after the special district meeting and the Leeds preachers had repeatedly deluged the whole Connexion with their printed resolutions, and replies, and explanations, and defences. It is, therefore, unjust to assert, "that all this was done without waiting for the explanation and defence of the parties;" for it was their own *ex-parte* statements alone that furnished the sources of their condemnation. With all these facts the Conference were

fully acquainted; and they had not been able either to point out any error in the statements contained in the address, or to supply any new facts to alter their character! We, therefore, leave it with the Methodist Connexion to estimate the sincerity with which those reasons are assigned for the rejection of the address of this circuit.

4. That the charge of this circuit having interfered with the concerns of another and a distinct circuit, is sufficiently answered in the Address (p. 14).
5. That as to the charge, that the quarterly meeting has "given utterance and publicity to censures upon absent parties, by name, to whom no opportunity of rebutting them was afforded,"—we reply, that the parties published their own names, in their own resolutions; and made a merit of that conduct, which it was the duty of this, and of every other quarterly meeting to censure; and that these parties have, at all times, had the same opportunity of rebutting these censures (if that could have been done), which the quarterly meeting had of giving utterance and publicity to them. But it is evident, that something more than *opportunity* was required to rebut censures, which were so justly due, and so loudly called for.

V. That, having exposed the unfounded pretexts on which the Conference had rejected the address of the circuit, it is with feelings of deep regret that we see the Methodist Conference turn round and abuse their best friends in this circuit, merely because they have told them the truth. With most uncharitable feeling, they affirm "the real object of its chief promoters to have been, not the redress of the alleged grievances, but the excitement of dissatisfaction and suspicion among our societies!" The fourth preliminary of the Address (p. 2) is a sufficient answer to this calumny. Does this Address propose any alteration in Methodism? Has it any other object than to maintain the constitution of 1797? And what have any of our highly esteemed friends and brethren to gain, by the excitement of dissatisfaction and suspicion in our societies? If a party of them, disgusted at the pride and ambition which have characterised the proceedings of the Conference throughout these disputes, should choose to leave the Connexion, would not their first and constant aim be, to re-establish Methodism in its purity and original simplicity? Have the ejected brethren at Leeds any other desire or design? Of "dissatisfaction and suspicion" there is, indeed, an abundance in our societies! The Conference know very well whence "the offence cometh!" This dissatisfaction increases; and it must increase, so long as the Conference, in its grasp at absolute power, shall continue to sap the foundations of our dearest rights, and repay with ingratitude and insult, the love of a generous and hitherto confiding people!

VI. It having been wantonly asked, "Why, if we believe these things of the Methodist Conference, we continue to support the system?"—we reply, that our connexion with Wesleyan Methodism is a connexion with God and with his people. These are ties which it difficult for us to break. There are who can tear themselves away; but we know not that they are happy in so doing. For the present, at least, we see no imperative obligation on us to withdraw from that altar, at which we and our families have been accustomed to worship, merely because an *alien* spirit has entered into some of those who officiate there! Neither God nor the people have yet sanctioned the Divine

Right claimed by the Methodist Conference. The majority of us, therefore, prefer rather to remain, and oppose, as far as we have the means, the growing corruption. We still hope to see better days! The Conference, amongst whom there are still many good men, may yet be brought to a better mind. We have reason to know, that the Address from this circuit has produced, and will continue to produce, a very general sensation; which, with other causes, cannot fail to operate as a serious check on the absolute party. Whilst, therefore, we tender our sincere and grateful thanks to those excellent and highly esteemed brethren, who were appointed by the quarterly meeting to revise and present the address to the Conference, we most earnestly request of them to publish that Address, with such notes and explanations as may be thought necessary and desirable, and to adopt every means for giving to it the most extended circulation; and may HE, who has strongly forbidden in his church, the exercise of that deadly power against which we contend, supersede all these evils by the power of his own Spirit!

VII. We utterly deny all right, power, or authority, either in the Methodist Conference, or in any district meeting, to interfere in the *local affairs* of this circuit; or to try, suspend, or expel, any *local* officer or member of society; and we *solemnly* and *affectionately* enjoin and warn all our leaders, local preachers, trustees, and stewards, in case any special district meeting shall at any time assemble within this circuit, *on any such matters or affairs*, neither to attend nor to hold any communication with such special district meeting, or with any member thereof: and we further solemnly engage and pledge ourselves to oppose, with all our influence, any attempt to introduce into any of our local meetings, on any pretence whatever, any preachers who are not regularly stationed in the circuit, without the special leave of such meeting first obtained, and without a positive engagement, on the part of every preacher so introduced, to withdraw immediately on being requested so to do by any member of the meeting.

VIII. That after the recent decision of the Conference, we cannot expect our worthy and excellent superintendent, whom we all highly esteem and revere, to put these resolutions formally to the quarterly meeting. With feelings of delicacy to him, as well as to testify more strongly our concurrence therein, we have therefore resolved to subscribe our names.

SOUTHWARK, Sept. 23rd, 1828.

JAMES SPICER, Leader and Auditor, Southwark Chapel.

ELISHA WILSON, Leader and Society-steward.

W. G. STUBLEY, Local Preacher, Trustee, and Auditor.

J. H. BOWLER, Poor-steward and Leader, Southwark Chapel.

JAMES BICKERTON, Leader and Auditor, ditto.

RICHARD SMITH, Local Preacher and Leader, ditto.

C. J. JONES, Leader and Trustee, ditto.

THOMAS SHEPHERD, Trustee, ditto.

JOHN BECKETT, Local Preacher and Trustee, ditto.

THOMAS KNIGHT, Trustee, ditto.

THOMAS GABRIEL, Trustee of Southwark and Walworth Chapels.

HENRY TYLER, Society-steward and Leader, Southwark Chapel.

GEORGE CROSS, Leader, ditto.

THOMAS JAGG, ditto, ditto.



HARRY HISCOCK, Leader, Southwark Chapel.  
 EDWARD F. HARVEY, ditto, ditto.  
 JOHN BOAST, ditto, ditto.  
 RICHARD FARROW, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM SHEPHERD, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM DAVIS, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM WRIGHT, ditto, ditto.  
 EDWARD HEWITT, Society-steward, ditto.  
 WILLIAM BOWLER, Trustee, ditto.  
 JOHN SHIPTON, Trustee of City Road and Southwark Chapels.  
 JAMES RICHARDSON, Auditor to the Quarterly Meeting.  
 JOHN HEY, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM BUCKLAND, ditto, ditto.  
 JOHN RATTENBURY, Local Preacher.  
 JOHN PLUCKNETT, Local Preacher and Leader.  
 WILLIAM JONES, Local Preacher and Secretary to the Local Preachers' Meeting.  
 WILLIAM BRADSHAW MOORE, Local Preacher.  
 JOHN WILLIAMS, jun., Local Preacher and Leader.  
 JOHN STEVENS, Local Preacher.  
 WILLIAM HIGGS, Leader, Southwark Chapel, and Trustee of Lambeth and Walworth Chapels.  
 JOHN TURNLEY, Trustee and Steward, Lambeth Chapel.  
 JOHN CORDEROY, Trustee, Society and Trustee-steward, ditto.  
 C. T. GABRIEL, Trustee, ditto.  
 JAMES NASH, Society-steward and Trustee, ditto.  
 GEORGE CORDEROY, Society-steward and Trustee, ditto.  
 JOSEPH ASHTON, Leader and Trustee, ditto.  
 GEORGE WRIGHT, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM DOWNING, ditto, ditto.  
 THOMAS TURNER, Leader, ditto.  
 WILLIAM BAXTER, Poor-steward, ditto.  
 RICHARD PIERCE, Leader, ditto.  
 MARTIN WEST, ditto, ditto.  
 JOHN URSELL, ditto, ditto.  
 JOSEPH RAIN, ditto, ditto.  
 JAMES FOWLER, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM COLLINS, ditto, ditto.  
 GEORGE MILES, ditto, ditto.  
 JOSHUA COOK, ditto, ditto.  
 HENRY WEBB, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM ROSSITER, ditto, ditto.  
 THOMAS GOAD, ditto, ditto.  
 JOHN DOWNING, ditto, ditto.  
 EDMAN GOODRICH, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM REEVES, ditto, ditto.  
 EDWARD PRICE, ditto, ditto.  
 THOMAS FRANKLIN, ditto, ditto.  
 JOHN B. MORRIS, Leader and Auditor, ditto.  
 JOHN KNIGHT, Leader and Steward, Walworth Chapel.  
 GEORGE NORTON, ditto, ditto.  
 ROBERT DOWIE, Leader, ditto.  
 CORNELIUS CARLY, ditto, ditto.  
 EDWARD VINCER, ditto, ditto.  
 SAMUEL MOTE, ditto, ditto.

JOHN WILKINSON, Trustee, Walworth Chapel.  
 JOHN MARSHALL, Trustee, ditto.  
 TIMOTHY BARRY, Trustee, ditto.  
 JAMES HEYS, Leader, Gainsford Street, and Trustee, ditto.  
 WILLIAM WILSON, Local Preacher and Leader, ditto.  
 JESSE CARLY, Local Preacher.  
 WILLIAM GAZE, ditto.  
 RICHARD CAMPION, Trustee, Walworth Chapel.  
 WILLIAM WRATHALL, Trustee, ditto, and Steward and Leader of  
     Gainsford Street Chapel.  
 THOMAS BILLING, Leader, Gainsford Street Chapel.  
 JOHN HOOPEL, ditto, ditto.  
 WILLIAM MORREN, Leader and Auditor, ditto.  
 JOHN HOLLOWAY, Leader, ditto.  
 JOHN SACKETT, Leader, ditto.  
 WILLIAM DAWSON, Leader and Steward, ditto.  
 JOHN DELAMARE, Poor-steward, ditto.  
 JOHN RAMSDEN, Auditor, ditto.  
 WILLIAM DALE, Leader and Steward, Brixton Chapel.  
 THOMAS MORRIS, Poor-steward, ditto.  
 JOHN LOWE, Leader and Steward, Broad Wall Chapel.  
 JOHN SCRASE LANGRIDGE, Local Preacher, Steward, and Leader,  
     ditto.  
 HENRY MOORHOUSE, Local Preacher and Leader, ditto.  
 HENRY CAVENDISH, Leader, ditto.  
 ROBERT RABY, Trustee, Albion Street Chapel.  
 JOHN JONES, Leader, ditto.  
 GEORGE EDWARDS, Leader and Society-steward, ditto.  
 JOSEPH STIFF, Leader and Auditor, ditto.  
 THOMAS BRADSHAW, Leader, ditto.  
 JAMES CHIZNELL, Leader, ditto.  
 JOHN JOHNSON, Society-steward, ditto.  
 THOMAS CROWER, Poor-steward, ditto.  
 WILLIAM HARRIS, ditto, ditto.  
 J. PATTON, Local Preacher.  
 WILLIAM SNOW, Trustee, Southville.  
 WILLIAM PALMER, Steward and Trustee, ditto.  
 JOSEPH CATO, Trustee, ditto.  
 WILLIAM GLOVER, Leader, ditto.  
 JOSEPH TAITE, Trustee of City Road and Southwark Chapels.  
 JOHN WILLIAMS, Trustee, Southwark Chapel.

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REPLY TO THE REV. RICHARD WATSON'S  
"AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS," &c.

[The preceding Address and Resolutions called forth the Rev. Richard Watson, as the champion of the Conference, who issued an "Affectionate Address," which produced the following rejoinder, which to the present is unanswered. We have taken out so much of the matter as was merely ephemeral.—ED.]

REV. SIR,— \* \* \* \* \* The Address was originally the result of the reflections of some of our "more intelligent and influential friends," on the publications which the late President directed to be circulated in this circuit. It was first read in the Quarterly Meeting, and thence referred to a very competent and highly respectable Committee. This committee canvassed every paragraph, weighed every argument, examined and compared everything with the Rules and Concessions of 1797; and having spent a fortnight in diligently and carefully revising, altering, and correcting the Address, they finally presented the result of their labours to an adjourned quarterly meeting, who adopted it in its present form, and ordered it to be signed on their behalf by the circuit stewards. Never was a public document prepared with greater care and deliberation;—never did there appear, on any branch of Methodist discipline and government, an argument which claimed and merited more serious attention from the Methodist public.

You have wisely confined your attack to about eight pages only of this Address. You have, indeed, laboured hard and warily, and have done what you could! You have exhausted all your resources of art, stratagem, and strength. But it was a fruitless attempt; and the failure only serves to prove, beyond all argument, the intrinsic merit and solid character of this highly constitutional and unanswerable work. After all your laboured efforts, it stands a monument, not of Independency, as you would falsely represent, but of the sound Methodistical principles, and truly Christian views and sentiments, of a circuit inferior to none in the Methodist Connexion. An angry and disappointed tyranny, indeed, dashes its foaming rage against its base; but it stands, a rock that cannot be moved; and, frowning on your folly, it bids you retire and be calm. To attribute such a work to individual merit, is to award a palm which no individual amongst us would have the temerity to claim. As the assignment, however, is made by you evidently to gratify a spirit of deep malevolence against some individual—and, in all probability, to pay off an old grudge, we deem it proper to remark, that if other motive had been wanting, gratitude, and the indulgence you have already received at our hands, ought to have deterred you from such an effort. Could we have descended so low, we might easily have found an author of the petulant, unfounded, and very discreditable resolutions of the last Conference, relative to this same address. These resolutions, however, having passed the Conference, we treated them as a public act, for which no individual could be held responsible. We are far, indeed, from thinking (and we make the acknowledgment with pleasure),

that the great body of preachers, piously labouring in the circuits, ever wished for the extravagant power which you, and the party you advocate, have claimed ; but they are misled and abused by a factious band of ambitious men ; and are taught to believe, that these powers are necessary to the existence and prosperity of their work. Be this as it may, we might, perhaps, fairly have taken that occasion of warning the Conference, against entrusting a man of deeply wounded feelings, and bitter personal animosities, with the drawing up of public documents, for which they, as a body, must be deemed responsible.

Previously to entering on a more direct notice of your pamphlet, we must beg leave to recal attention to the real question discussed in Part I. of the London South Address. This is the more necessary, *first*, because you have endeavoured to mix up that simple question with a multitude of other questions which have no necessary connexion with it ; and, *second*, because, throughout your pamphlet, you are exceedingly shy of letting us speak for ourselves. You not only seem afraid to quote our language, in stating the question generally, but, even when professing to reply to some particular argument, you are very careful to give the reader a version of your own ; and which (as we shall have occasion to notice hereafter) generally turns out to be something very different from what is to be found in the London South Address.

1. Let it be observed, then, in the first place, that, in the introductory part of our Address to the Conference, we have solemnly and repeatedly avowed our sincere attachment to the general institutions and economy of Wesleyan Methodism ; and have declared, "that we do not yield, even to the Conference itself, in ardent attachment to the constitution and discipline of the Connexion, as laid down by Mr. Wesley."

2. That in no part of our Address and Resolutions is any change proposed, or even a wish intimated for any improvement in the general system and discipline of the Connexion. On the contrary, we declare, "that we wish for no changes in the system of Methodism ;" that we are content and satisfied with that system, as it has long been established in this circuit. Is this Independency ? Is it faction ? Is it reform ?

These solemn declarations of a whole circuit, attested by the signatures of the circuit stewards, in the first instance, and subsequently by those of 104 officers of the church, many of them of the highest character for respectability, piety, and long standing in the societies, will, we think, have weight with the Connexion. You, indeed, with admirable modesty, have chosen, in twenty places of your pamphlet, and without a shadow of proof, to call in question these solemn and repeated declarations. You have told us, you fear that some of us "care nothing for Methodism," and talked to us about every man we meet having "his project for mending matters of government, as every man can tell us of an infallible remedy for the toothache ;" although you well knew that our Address contained no project for "mending Methodism," nor any proposition for altering anything relating to it. \* \* \* \* \*

3. It is no speculative question, then, no new theory or plan of improvement or reform, which is discussed in the South London Address. From beginning to end, no such question is introduced ; we admit, that whatever may be the opinions of individuals as to the

theory of our constitution, we have enjoyed peace and prosperity under it; where that is the case, we should hold it unlawful to disturb any church with speculative questions, the discussion of which might distract the attention of its-members and disturb its peace. But it was for this very reason, that we were not willing to allow others to speculate with the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism, and to sport with its laws, for the purpose of establishing in the ministry a power which the Connexion has never yet acknowledged, and which it never can admit, without first surrendering its fundamental principles of church government. In the printed resolutions of the Leeds Special District Meeting, we found that an attempt of this kind had not only been made, but that it had actually been carried through, with a reckless disregard of character and consequence, and at a sacrifice to the societies of upwards of 1,000 souls. How terrible are the sacrifices which daring men will make at the shrine of ambition! In order to place this attempt in its true light, it will be necessary to contrast the principle of Methodistical law, as laid down in the Plan of Pacification and other documents, with the leading and acknowledged facts of the Leeds case. This we shall attempt here, even at the risk of extending our introductory matter to an inconvenient length; no matter can be of more vital importance to the Connexion, for our spiritual prosperity itself depends on our maintaining unimpaired our existing institutions. No apology, therefore, will be needful to the general reader for adverting here to the

### III. *Principles and Facts of the Controversy at Leeds.*

The Plan of Pacification is a solemn treaty between the Conference and several hundred trustees, and other principal friends, who assembled at Manchester, on behalf of the people, in the year 1795. It is entitled, "Articles of Agreement for General Pacification." These Articles are arranged under two distinct heads: I. "Concerning the Lord's Supper, Baptism, &c." II. "Concerning Discipline." Under both these heads the Plan of Pacification contains highly important and useful regulations, the value of which is enhanced by the still more important principles, which are necessarily implied, and conceded by the Conference, in these regulations. This plan, however, was very defective under the second head, relating to matters of discipline. It provided chiefly for the trial of preachers, and left many rights, which the people justly and scripturally claimed, wholly undefined. As a plan of "general pacification," therefore, it failed; for some of the preachers in that day, as in the present, had high notions of their own powers. In what church, and in what age, were the clergy destitute of such notions? The commotions and agitations which disturbed the Connexion therefore continued, and it was presently found impossible for the system to go on without a further settlement.

Accordingly, about two hundred trustees, delegates from all parts of the kingdom, assembled at Leeds during the sittings of Conference, in the year 1797. The Conference, of course, did not much relish these sturdy assemblies, who came fully prepared to discuss and maintain their Christian liberties. They numbered amongst them the authors of many able pamphlets and resolutions on the subject of Methodistical government, and were masters of their subject. It is amusing to see this Conference, in their address to the American Methodists, complaining of "violent convulsions;" of "liberty being made a cloak for licentiousness;" and invoking the sympathies of our

dear brother Jonathan, as though those "lads of liberty," across the Atlantic, could weep with the discomfited champions of an arbitrary system of government! Upon the whole, however, the Conference of 1797 put a tolerable face upon the matter. They entered into a further treaty with the delegates, containing, under distinct heads, many stipulations of vital importance, touching financial and all other temporal matters, the admission and expulsion of members, the appointment and removal of leaders, stewards, and local preachers, &c. &c. These stipulations were published in a printed circular, and were forwarded to the circuits before the Conference broke up.

One of the most important engagements, to which the Conference stood pledged by this circular, was that contained in Article 6, by which they "determined, that all the rules which relate to the societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and quarterly meetings, should be published with the rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members." The stipulations contained in the printed circular, with the "Collection of Rules or Code of Laws," thus published "in execution of the above determination," constitute what are denominated "The Concessions of 1797." The Plan of Pacification, and these Concessions, have been not inaptly termed the Magna Charta, and the Bill of Rights, of the Methodist Connexion. To give the greater solemnity to those solemn engagements, the following declaration, subscribed by one hundred and forty-five preachers, including the President and Secretary of the Conference, appeared in the printed Minutes for that year, dated August 1st, 1797.

"Whereas we, the undersigned, have, on this and the preceding day, carefully revised the rules drawn up and left us by our late venerable Father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which were published by him in our Large Minutes, to which we consented when we were admitted, and by which we were regulated during his life: and whereas we have collected together those rules which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism, as well as others to which we have no objection; we do now VOLUNTARILY and in GOOD FAITH sign our names, as approving of and engaging to comply with the aforesaid collection of rules, or code of laws, *God being our helper!*"

In the above declaration it is evident that two distinct classes of laws are alluded to. The *first* was a revision of the Large Minutes published by Mr. Wesley, to which the preachers consented when admitted members of the Conference, and by which THEY were governed during his life. The *second* was a collection of rules believed to be essential to Methodism (such of the old rules, relating to the societies, &c. as were retained in the treaty with the Delegates), as well as others (the new stipulations introduced by that treaty) to which the Conference had no objection. This distinction is very important. With the Large Minutes the local officers and members are not concerned. They form no part of the Concessions of 1797; but were separately published for the use of the preachers, who alone "consented to them when they were admitted." It is the *second* "Collections of Rules or Code of Laws, published with the Rules of Society for the benefit and convenience of all the members," which formed the subject of treaty between the Conference and the Delegates of 1797; and which, therefore, constitutes the only basis of law, by which the societies and local officers are, or can be, bound.

This clear and obvious distinction between these two classes of



laws, arises necessarily out of the relation subsisting between Methodism and her Conference; and the particular constitution of the latter assembly. The Conference itself is a voluntary association; but such an association implies the right of the general body to dictate and enforce its own terms of union on all its members. Hence arises the *legislative* power of the Conference over its own members—the preachers; and that particular class of laws comprised in what are termed “The Large Minutes.” It is singular, however, and worthy of remark, that in the Deed Poll of the 28th Feb., 1784, by which Mr. Wesley declared the members and defined the powers of the Conference, he makes no direct mention of any legislative authority as vested in that assembly. This power, of course (to the extent we have mentioned, but no further), is implied in several of the clauses of that deed; but a standing legislative authority in the church of God was no very favourite notion with Mr. Wesley. A few plain and simple rules, the obvious dictates of prudence and common sense, were all that he deemed necessary. Such rules he had provided for the Conference and the Connexion; and his constant observation to the preachers was, “our rules do not want mending but keeping.”

On the other hand, the connexion between the Conference and the Societies is also voluntary. Consent of both parties, *express or implied*, is of the very essence of such a connexion. The scriptural authority of a Christian minister over the people of his charge is out of the question here. Even in that case, the minister has no *legislative* authority; his right is simply to maintain and enforce the laws of Christ. He who would impose any other law upon his people, and especially against their consent, is not a minister of Jesus Christ. Mr. Wesley himself could have no right to make laws and enforce rules on several hundred thousand of his fellow Christians, *without their consent*. But this consent Mr. Wesley enjoyed, and to an indefinite extent. The consent, in this case, indeed, was not *express* but *implied*. Mr. Wesley was authorised by no express treaty; nor was he bound by any *formal* stipulation. For this very reason his power died with him. The consent of the people, that he should legislate for, and rule them, he could neither transfer nor bequeath to another; for though the people had consented to him, they had not, and, as he himself tells us, *never would*, consent to any other (“Wesley’s Works,” vol. viii. p. 313. Ed. 1829). This alone is a sufficient answer to that hacknied absurdity, that “the Conference derived from Mr. Wesley the power to rule the Methodist Connexion.”

But to return: The distinction between these two classes of rules—between the “Large Minutes,” on the one hand, and the “Collection of Rules or Code of Laws,” on the other; and their distinct relation, the former to the government of the preachers, and the latter to that of the local officers and societies, is not only thus pointed out by the very language of the above declaration, so solemnly made and signed by the Conference of 1797, but also by the practice therein referred to. The preachers *consented* to these “Large Minutes when admitted members of Conference.” Ever since their first publication by Mr. Wesley, the young preachers, when admitted, receive a copy of these Minutes inscribed as follows, and signed by the President and Secretary of the Conference:—“You think it your duty to call sinners to repentance; make full proof thereof, and we shall rejoice to receive you as a fellow labourer.” On the admission of local officers and members, however, they are not even informed of the existence of these

"Large Minutes." As to *members*, the rule simply requires that the Rules of the Society be given them "the first time they meet;" and as to *local officers*, they consent to nothing but the rules and usages of the meetings of which they are elected members.

The Conference of 1797 further confirmed this distinction between the Large Minutes and the Collection of Rules or Code of Laws, by an act the most unequivocal, and which, beyond all controversy, determines their separate and distinct application. Having "revised" the former, and "collected together" the latter, they published them in two *separate* pamphlets. The first of these pamphlets, containing the "Large Minutes" revised, they continued to give, inscribed and signed as above, to the young preachers "when admitted." But the second, containing the "Collection of Rules or Code of Laws," is expressly stated in an introductory note, to be published "in execution" of Article 6 of the printed Circular, "for the benefit and convenience of all the members." This Article of the Circular is in fact printed at the head of this latter publication; and declares it to contain "ALL the rules which relate to the societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and quarterly meetings." And if it contain ALL such rules, then the conclusion is inevitable, viz., that the Large Minutes and their contents do not relate to the local officers and societies, but *exclusively* to the government of the travelling preachers.

This distinction being of vital importance to the present question, we must further remark, that it is a distinction which has been always observed and maintained. It is distinctly pointed out by Myles, by Crowther, and indeed by every other writer on the constitution of Methodism. Dr. Warren, in his Digest of the Laws of the Connexion lays it down as an acknowledged principle, that "as the Large Minutes, published by Mr. Wesley, contain the principles by which the preachers are governed; so the Plan of Pacification, agreed upon between the preachers and the people in the year 1795, and the subsequent regulations made at Leeds, in the year 1797, constitute a basis of government of the societies:" and so clear and indisputable did the Doctor deem this principle, that he has founded on it the arrangement of his book.

Now, the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797, *relating to districts*, are to be found only in the Large Minutes, revised as above, for the government of the preachers. They are not inserted, nor even referred to, in any shape, directly or indirectly, in the Collection of Rules or Code of Laws for the government of the people. It was the application of these regulations, *relating to districts*, to local officers and members, that constituted the great offence of the Leeds Special District Meeting; and which is the plausible cover of the attempts then made and still pursued on the part of the Conference to overturn the "Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797," and to recover to themselves that absolute power over the people which they then so solemnly renounced.

With a view to extend the knowledge of these standard regulations, as well as to shut out all complaint of quotations, we have printed the whole of them relating to the people in an Appendix.\* In some respects they present but a poor specimen of Methodistical legislation, but they are sufficient for practical purposes; and so long as we

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\* The Deed of Declaration and the so-called Laws of 1835 are added to the Appendix, in this edition, for the purpose of reference.

maintain them in their true spirit and common-sense acceptance, neither Conference, nor district meeting, nor superintendent, can trample on our liberties. As matters of solemn treaty and compact between the Conference and the Connexion, we ought carefully to distinguish them from all other Conference laws and regulations. Whatever may be thought of the *legislative* power of the Conference, we must not omit to remark, that *the Conference itself has no power whatever to make a law, or to enjoin or sanction any act*, which shall have the effect of altering, revoking, or weakening, these fundamental articles, for that would imply a gross breach of faith with the people. This principle not only admitted, but insisted upon, by Mr. Vevers, in his amusing pamphlet; which, having been published at the book room, and applauded in the magazine, we presume we may quote as an authority.—“The Conference itself,” he remarks, “has not the power to make or to promulgate any new law, which changes or affects the constitution of Methodism. By so doing, it would commit an act of suicide. I maintain that the Conference has not that power, unless it destroy itself.” You have also faintly told us in your address, that “the rules of 1795 and 1797, in their fair and consuetudinary interpretation, are always considered by the Conference as the final rule of decision.” The admission, thus extorted, is of some value in a book written expressly to undermine those rules, by forcing on them, as consuetudinary, an interpretation (or rather, by grafting on them an exceptional power and right of interference in extraordinary cases), which they not only do not sanction, but which, as we shall show, is calculated wholly to destroy their effect. The men of 1797, who thus stipulated with the Conference, whom Mr. Vevers calls the “friends of religious liberty and of primitive and genuine Methodism,” and of whom he remarks, “there were giants in the earth in those days!” knew too well what they were about, to admit of any such exceptional power or right of interference, as you contend for. Even your pleas of necessity and the public good, which form the pith and substance of your address to us, would not have been listened to for a moment by those “giants.” They were too well aware of the truth which a nervous pen has lately enforced upon the nation, that “all free institutions have perished by the introduction of an exceptional power, to which the authority of superseding the laws has been unwarily or craftily entrusted;” and that “all pernicious laws and precedents have been ushered into free governments upon the plea of some public good to be attained. It would be too barefaced and useless an attempt to enslave a whole people, by telling them that their slavery was the object intended.”

Recurring, then, to the principle laid down in the Plan of Pacification, the following are literal copies of the first and fourth articles, under the first head of that plan:—

Article 1. “The sacrament of the Lord’s supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except the majority of the trustees of that chapel, on the one hand, and the majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people), on the other hand, *allow of it*. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of the Conference shall be obtained before the Lord’s supper be administered.”

Article 4. “The administration of baptism, the burial of the dead, and service in church hours, shall be determined according to the regulations above-mentioned.”

The above articles furnish a clear principle, on matters highly important and necessary to a Christian church, but which had not theretofore been deemed essential to Methodism,—matters then newly introduced, and with which Mr. Wesley would not allow his lay preachers to meddle during his life. They are *positive* and *absolute*. The Plan of Pacification contains no reservation of an extraordinary power, or appellant jurisdiction, in favour of the Conference; no provision for the interference of a special district meeting; no exception in favour of the inherent rights of ministers and pastors. The *consent* of the people, as represented by the stewards and leaders, is indispensable,—*consent* is all that is reserved to the Conference. In these respects, then, the Conference have actually “introduced a power, in the strict sense, co-ordinate with the ministry!” and “if it is a co-ordinate power, in no case can you act without its authority!”

We must still beg leave to put it to the Connexion at large, whether the plain, pacific, and truly primitive principle thus laid down, of giving to the trustees, leaders, and stewards a voice (that is, the effective vote of a majority, and not the mockery of a consultation, by which the superintendent shall not be bound) in the administration of the Lord's supper, baptism, the burial of the dead, and service in church hours,—whether, we say, this principle be not the true Methodistical principle, applicable to all matters which some may deem of importance, but which are not essential in the economy of Methodism; and whether, therefore, this principle do not equally apply to organs, liturgies, surplices, and every other appendage of public worship. We insist, that this just and equitable principle applies equally to all such matters, and that for the following reasons:—

1. Because all the more eminent and standard writers on the discipline and practice of the primitive churches, have admitted and proved that the members of those churches, as well as their ministers, had an effective voice in whatever concerned the discipline and ordinances of the church. This principle constituted one of those powerful arguments employed in the controversy of 1795 and 1797, and on which the Plan of Pacification and Concessions were founded, as appears by a multitude of pamphlets in our possession. It is, therefore, a *fundamental* principle of Wesleyan Methodism. The object of your address, indeed, is to overthrow this principle; and yet, with strange inconsistency, you tell us, “The more clearly we perceive our system to rest on Holy Scripture and the reason of things, the more firmly shall we be united to maintain and cherish it.”

2. Because the counter-principle, laid down in the Minutes of the Leeds Special District Meeting, on the right of a leaders' meeting to express its *opinion*, when it is proposed to introduce an organ into any chapel with which such meeting may be connected—viz., that such opinions “are not, on any just principles, or by any law or usage of Methodism, to be admitted as binding?”—and which principle it is the object of your book to maintain,—is altogether contrary to Holy Scripture and the reason of things. It is also, as you very well know, as contrary to the hitherto acknowledged practice of Methodism, as it is to justice, equity, and good faith; and, like the mock consultation which you recommend as between the superintendent and the leaders' meeting, but in which, as you tell us, “the ultimate decision must rest with the minister himself,” it is an insult on the good sense and intelligence of the local meetings, and a most unwarrantable encroachment of the ministerial power on the liberties of the church.

3. But the universal application of this truly Methodistical and pacific principle, that the local authorities have *an effective vote* in whatever concerns the administration of the church, does not rest solely or chiefly on general arguments. By the same Plan of Pacification, it is extended to the trial of preachers in relation to, 1. DOCTRINE, 2. MORALS, 3. ABILITIES, and 4. OBEDIENCE to Methodistical Rules. Is this evidence?—or are we to be told, that the votes of the trustees, leaders, and stewards, *on these matters*, “are not, on any just principle, or by any law or usage of Methodism, to be admitted as binding?”

4. Again: by the articles under the *first* head of the Concessions of 1797, no *financial* matter, and by the articles under the *second* head of the same Concessions, no *other temporal matter* (evidently in contradistinction to *finance*), can be taken up or transacted by the district meeting, “till the approbation of the respective quarterly meetings be first given, *signed by the circuit stewards*.” This fundamental article of our constitution, appears not to have been sufficiently insisted on in the present controversy. Unless an organ be decreed to be a purely *spiritual* matter; if it have any form and substance which give it affinity to “things temporal,” then, by this rule, the application of the Brunswick Chapel Trustees to the district meeting, in the first instance, was a violation of the constitution of Methodism. It is not pretended that these trustees had the approbation of the quarterly meeting, signed by the circuit stewards; but without such approbation, and so signed, the district meeting had no right whatever to entertain the question; and this, be it remembered, is one of the *fundamental laws* which the Conference has no right whatever to alter, revoke, or infringe.

5. The Conference long ago approved and printed in their Minutes a form of trust deed for the settlement of our chapels. They have repeatedly and strenuously enjoined all the chapels to be settled according to this form. They have enjoined the superintendents not to allow any chapel to be occupied for public worship until so settled; and it is a standing regulation of the Chapel Fund, that no assistance from that fund shall be granted in aid of any chapel which has not been previously settled on the Conference plan. The Conference form of trust, as we have shown in the Address of this circuit to the Conference, p. 24, places all *alterations* as to the times, or *additions* to public worship, on the same footing, and to be regulated by the same principle as is laid down in the Plan of Pacification. This argument, which is more fully stated in our Address to the Conference, is doubtless one of those which you are pleased to term, “bold assertions,” “artful leadings,” &c. Our arguments, however, are before the public; and such is our opinion of them, that we think the man who will assert, after weighing them, that the pacific principle laid down in 1795 (and then conceded *absolutely*, in regard to the doctrine, conduct, morals, and abilities of preachers,—to the Lord’s supper, baptism, burial, and service in church hours, and generally to all *temporal matters*), is not applicable to organs, liturgies, &c., and indeed to every change in, or addition to, public worship in a Methodist chapel, either wants common sense, or he is destitute of a quality still more estimable.

Lastly, This principle was evidently acted upon by the Conference in their law of 1820, relative to organs. By that law, no new or different principle is laid down; but, as by the Plan of Pacification the



sacrament could not be administered until the *consent* of the Conference had been first obtained, so, by the law of 1820 it is assumed, that the special *consent* of the Conference is necessary to the erection of an organ in a Methodist chapel. The law of 1820 proceeds, then, not by any means to infringe on the Plan of Pacification, by laying down a new principle, but to regulate what it properly belonged to the Conference to regulate, viz., the manner in which their *consent* should be applied for and obtained: "every application for such *consent* shall be first made at the district meeting; and if it obtain their sanction, shall be then referred to a committee of the Conference." Any leaders' meeting might, in like manner, pass a regulation, stating in what manner, and upon what terms, they would give their *consent* in any matter which it required the consent of a leaders' meeting to carry into effect.

Let us now glance at a few of the leading FACTS of the Leeds case, as admitted in the accredited documents; and see whether a spirit of most determined wrong has not dictated all those measures, which have led to such unhappy results at Leeds, and have tarnished the character of the Methodist Conference. We say the character of the Conference reluctantly, because we are fully aware that it is your party to whom the odium of those measures properly belongs. We are still willing to hope, that there may be found in the Methodist Conference virtue to perform the only redeeming act which yet remains to them, viz., to put down this party; to renounce their principles; and recall their measures. By such an act alone can they set themselves right with the religious public, assert their own independence, and save the Connexion.

The plain facts of the Leeds case, then, are as follow:—A few trustees, and others, wished to have an organ in Brunswick Chapel, Leeds. For this purpose a paper was drawn up, purporting to be a petition or request from the seat-holders to the trustees, to erect such organ; when the acting trustees thought they had signatures enough to justify their taking up the matter, they applied to the superintendent of the circuit. Mr. Stanley advised the proper Methodistical course, viz., to apply to the leaders' meeting for their sanction. The matter, on being introduced to the leaders' meeting, met with very strong opposition, and a large majority decided against the erection of an organ, on the ground that it would impair that simplicity of worship which they had ever maintained. There is, in the minds of many of our most pious and experienced leaders, an apprehension which you may, perhaps, regard as a weak prejudice,—viz., that exterior pomp and mundane splendour add nothing to the value of religious services in the estimation of Him to whom they are addressed; and that these meretricious appendages of public worship generally accompany, if they do not indicate, the decay of piety in the Christian church.\* Here, then, on the principle of the Plan of Pacification, and on every principle of good sense and equity, the affair ought to have

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\* The early Romans, from the foundation of their ancient city, discarded the sumptuousness and splendour which the Greeks had introduced into their religious festivals, and the service of the Temples. Cicero laments the loss of this primitive simplicity in his time, and forcibly asks, "*Minusne gratas Diis immortalibus capedines ac fictiles urnas fuisse, quam delicatas (delicias) istorum pateras arbitramini?*"—"Can we think that these earthen and potters' vessels were less agreeable to the immortal gods, in their worship, than those of gold and silver, which are now so much esteemed?"—1 *Parad.*



dropped; the voice of the church and the law of Methodism ought to have been respected: these, however, were authorities to which the pride of the organ party could not submit; they had interest with some of the preachers; and, acting on advice which ought never to have been given, they determined on over-stepping the leaders' meeting and the quarterly meeting, by an application to the district meeting. The superintendent of Leeds was chairman of the district; he knew that the opposition to the organ was very strong, and that the measure was therefore a dangerous one. At the district meeting, accordingly, the trustees were mortified by a second defeat! The district meeting, so improperly appealed to, refused their sanction. Surely the matter ought now to have ended; for, as we have shown at length in our Address to the Conference (p. 22), no application could be made, by the law of 1820, for the consent of the Conference, unless the consent of the district meeting had been *first* obtained. The pertinacious application for this latter consent, might alone have been deemed a sufficient insult to the leaders' meeting and the Leeds people. But the pride of the human heart, and especially the pride of party, is not so easily overcome. To deck out and adorn the services of a Methodist chapel in all the pomp and parade which the Established Church has borrowed from the pride of Rome, is an object as dear to certain preachers as it appears to have been to certain trustees of Brunswick Chapel. With such preachers, therefore, the organ party had a common interest, and the influence of the former in the Methodist Conference was deemed fully adequate to accomplish any object they might undertake. Suffice it to say, that an application was made to the Conference for leave to erect the organ! The strongest remonstrances were made against it, on behalf of the Leeds people; but the Conference, in defiance of these remonstrances, in contempt of the decision of the leaders' meeting and of the district meeting, and in the very teeth of the Plan of Pacification, of their own law of 1820, and of the trust deeds of the chapels, granted such leave!

The leave thus granted by the Conference did not still justify the erection of the organ. The *consent* of the leaders' meeting was indispensable, by the laws of Methodism. That consent could never be obtained. The organ, therefore, now standing in the Brunswick Chapel, Leeds, is a monument of the ascendancy of a turbulent faction, and of the overthrow of the laws and liberties of the Methodist Connexion. And mark the spirit of the men who have thus exalted themselves. The organ has been opened with a pomp and parade unparalleled in Methodism;—Mr. Wesley, the celebrated organist, was called down from London; popular preachers were engaged; the whole county was insulted with this unholy triumph of a few individuals over one of our oldest and most venerable societies; hand-bills were posted in all the neighbouring towns; in Manchester, and even in London, we saw placards a yard in length, and printed in the largest and boldest characters!

To expect that men, raised in any degree above the condition of abject slavery, should patiently submit to treatment so injurious and degrading,—to anticipate peace in the Leeds societies after all these multiplied wrongs, were only to betray gross ignorance of human nature. Accordingly we find that, immediately after the Conference of 1827, the greatest disorders prevailed in these societies. Before the new superintendent was settled in his office, irregular meetings

were held, the avowed objects of which were to oppose, as far as possible, the injustice which had been sanctioned, and to compel the preachers to respect the rights of the people. This was perfectly natural. What else could the Leeds people do? We admit that the proceedings of these meetings were very extraordinary; and, in ordinary circumstances, they would have been very unjustifiable. For this reason we declined any attempt to justify them. In our Address to the Conference, we were careful to distinguish between the disputes at Leeds and the proceedings of the special district meeting thereon. We confined our attention to the latter subject, and treated the question solely in a constitutional point of view.

In forming our judgment, however, of these irregular proceedings of the Leeds brethren, we cannot overlook two important considerations:—

1. That on the matter in dispute, all law and rule, moral and Methodistical, had been overturned and trampled under foot by their opponents, the trustees, the preachers, and the Conference. The law being thus at an end, we cannot see how their proceedings, whatever they might be, could be deemed illegal; for where there is no law, there can be no transgression. We, of course, confine this remark to the parties in dispute; the Methodist public may, and perhaps will, condemn, to a certain extent, both parties. But the Conference and the preachers can have no right to question the acts of the Leeds brethren; we cannot admit their privilege to break the laws of the Connexion at pleasure, and then to call upon the people to obey them. Before their complaints can be listened to, they must come into court with clean hands. Rom. ii. 1, 3, 21.

2. Whatever these proceedings might be, and however injurious to Methodism, they might have been put an end to at any time, by a simple act of justice on the part of the new superintendent. Their sole object was to prevent the erection of the organ until all parties could have fair play. This is proved by the very moderate and conciliatory proposals made to Mr. Grindrod, on the 13th October, 1827, which were,—

“I. That all preparations towards the erection of the organ shall be immediately suspended, and shall continue so until after the next Conference.

“II. That the leaders’ meeting and quarterly meeting shall have full power to address Conference on any of the subjects in dispute; and that their memorials shall be read in full Conference.

“III. That brother Johnson, and all the brethren united with him, in both circuits, shall, as a matter of course, resume their work and station, immediately after the next quarter day.”

This is not an hour of the day in which men should be afraid to speak out, and to utter a little plain truth in the ears of Methodist preachers. The reply of Mr. Grindrod to the above more than equitable propositions, in which the parties still submit the question to the Conference, and claim not half their right, renders him and his advisers responsible to God and to Methodism for all the consequences which followed. He replied, that “he could not interfere with the erection of the organ,” and insolently talked to these injured and respectable men, about “confessing the fault they had committed, and promising to observe Methodist discipline in future!” And you, in coming forward to apologise for these lawless proceedings, have “placed yourself, indeed, in an unpleasant position before the Connexion.”

It is in vain that you employ a prostituted rhetoric to gloss over these positive violations of Methodist law, these acts of insulting and degrading oppression and wrong. You may talk of "a dead and corrupt branch hanging upon the common stock, and defended from all pruning and lopping;" but we must beg leave to remind you, that many of the precious souls, whom you thus "pruned and lopped," went out of the societies making their solemn appeal to HIM who saw in that day the anguish of their spirits, and who will surely require a recompense!

All these proceedings we beheld, and kept silence; we entered not into the merits of the Leeds case. To the Leeds people we left the defence of their own liberties. It belonged not to us to give advice, although we should, doubtless, have adopted a very different course ourselves, if similarly situated. We did not feel ourselves called upon to interfere, and certainly never should have interfered in the controversy on this subject, if we had not seen, what was worse than all the rest, viz., that the proceedings of this special district meeting were detailed, defended, and published, with the sanction of the President and Secretary of the Conference, as a new code of discipline for the Methodist Connexion.

IV. The design and practical result of this new code of discipline, are to convert the preachers of a district into a cohort of flying police that may be readily convened on any given spot, and on the call of any superintendent who may chance to find himself in a minority, on some question which he is determined to carry in defiance of the local authorities; and in which he conceives, or has ascertained beforehand (the Leeds superintendent went to Manchester before he called the district meeting), that his brethren in the ministry will be well pleased to support him. This district meeting, or court of police, aware that it is no question of Methodist doctrine, nor even of morality, which they are called on to support (for these matters are otherwise and effectually secured in Methodism; and any alarm in relation to them exists only in your suppositious cases, which we shall handle anon), but simply one of ministerial power and authority, in which, if it can be carried against the people, they shall all be equal sharers, are instructed, in the first place, to declare that they are assembled on "an extraordinary emergency," for the preservation of Methodism! This "emergency," as we have stated in our Address to the Conference, may mean anything or nothing, no matter what! It is the declaration of the special district meeting, which is not to be examined or questioned by any authority on the part of the people! It may simply be, that the superintendent has been found in a minority; or, that a leaders' meeting, being dissatisfied with the proof, would not convict on evidence which he thought sufficient! Nay, it should seem, from the first resolution of the Leeds Special District Meeting, that it is sufficient to declare that an extraordinary emergency "is now alleged to exist." It makes no difference either that all the emergency is occasioned by the conduct of the preachers themselves! And you have not, in your address to us, ventured to say a single word in defence of those palpable violations of law, on the part of the Conference and the superintendent, out of which alone the "extraordinary emergency" at Leeds arose. This emergency once declared, however, the special district meeting is instantly invested "with full powers" to suspend all ordinary laws; to summon before it all the the local meetings in succession; to tender them a new test

of moral and Methodistical qualification; and to declare that the minority, however small, which adheres to the superintendent, is the *sound*, and the majority, however great, the *unsound*, part of the society. This sound minority are to be rewarded for their tame subserviency by a few sugar-plum resolutions; and the unsound majority, who have displayed some conscience in maintaining the liberties of the church, are to be overwhelmed with a torrent of indiscriminate abuse, as factious, disaffected, and in actual rebellion against their superintendent! Finally, the district meeting are "to act and decide" in the whole business, not according to any known and acknowledged rules, but simply "as to them may seem right and necessary." These "actings and decidings" present a very strange medley. Facts and principles, illustrations and reasonings, are jumbled together, to prepare the mind for novel and interested expositions of Methodistical law and Christian obligation. The offenders are to be distinguished and classed according to various degrees of delinquency; and a nicely adjusted scale is presented of reproof, warning, threatening, suspension, expulsion, and anathema; which, like the offences charged, are not brought home to A, B, and C, but are levelled, indiscriminately, against whole classes of offenders! The whole was to be a sweeping affair! It commenced practically with the exclusion of between thirty and forty leaders, many of whom had taken no part whatever, direct or indirect, with those whom you are pleased to call disaffected; but whose sole offence was their refusal to subscribe the new test. A simple and undeniable fact this, which should have prevented any man of conscience, or feeling, from taking any part with the men who perpetrated the Leeds business!

And who are the men, we could ask, whom you have thus excluded from the temple of God? Are they infidels, heretics, blasphemers, perverters of the truth, and enemies of the Saviour? Are they liars, thieves, adulterers, unclean persons, and injurious? You know that they neither hold the truth in unrighteousness, nor dishonour their profession! You know that of the one thousand souls thus cut off from the societies, most of them, and, for anything you can prove or dare allege, all of them, are the precious members of Christ! You know, or at least your brethren at Leeds know, that they were no sooner thrust out from the synagogue, than the Saviour met them and comforted them; that he filled their assemblies with his presence and power, and rendered their means of grace, both public and private, effectual to the conversion of souls, and to the edification of them that believe! These are facts so universally known and acknowledged, that you dare not attempt a denial of them! It was wise, it was prudent, it was exceedingly judicious in you, to omit all reference to the facts of the Leeds case. Those facts, whether they relate to the origin, the progress, or the results of that dispute, stand so diametrically opposed to your main object, that you did not even dare, with all your peculiar talent in this line, to risk an attempt at bending and twisting them to your purpose! They must be put altogether out of sight; and until the attention of the public can be wholly diverted from them, you are evidently aware that neither apology nor excuse can be made for the conduct of the special district meeting and the Conference, in relation to the Leeds case! All Scripture, all reason, and experience, and, as we have contended, and shall contend, all that is fundamental and practical in Methodism, concurs to condemn that conduct.

It is no apology for these proceedings, to tell us that you only expelled the principals, and that the rest excluded themselves. There is a relation between the leader and his flock, which cannot exist between them and any other minister or pastor. The leader is the man whose life and conversation they are best acquainted with, and which they have the most frequent opportunities of comparing with the Scripture standard. They know his faith, his spirit, his zeal,—his diligence, disinterestedness, and love. He is, in many instances, the man who first cared for their souls, and gathered them into the fold. Your public ministrations may have answered all the ends for which they were designed; but, according to our system, your intercourse with the people is brief and transitory. You speedily pass away, in all probability to return no more; but the leader is the pastor, who, assuming no authority or influence, save that of love, and spurning any other hire, watches incessantly for their souls, as he who must give a peculiar account. To the leader, then, if he be a faithful man (and such were the men whom you have expelled), the hearts of the people are knit; they entrust to him continually the secret of their souls; and, with happy and well-placed confidence, tell him all their hopes, their fears, their sorrows, and their joys. They unfold to him all their cares, conflicts, temptations, and trials; he knows their character, their situation in life, their peculiar besetments, and constitutional infirmities. From him they gratefully and affectionately receive instruction and counsel, consolation and comfort, reproof and warning, exhortation and encouragement; in short, all that can tend to the edification of their souls in faith, in knowledge, in holiness, and love. If, then, there be any power in love, or any love in the church of God, it must prevail here, to knit together the hearts of the leader and his people as the heart of one man. To attempt the removal of a leader, therefore, upon any questionable ground, is at all times a dangerous experiment; but when, as in the Leeds case, there was no allegation of false doctrine, no suspicion of immorality,—when the sole question was, whether leaders and people should be compelled to bow down to the new idol of lawless power, the people must have wanted hearts indeed, if they had not firmly adhered to the men who, under the great Head of the Church, were the true shepherds and bishops of their souls!

V. Returning now from this long but important digression, we have but to remind you, that the question discussed in Part I. of the London South Address, related exclusively to the Methodistical right and authority of the special district meeting to interfere with the local authorities at Leeds, in the manner set forth in their printed resolutions. That question is thus stated in the first sentence of this part of our Address: "That *travelling preachers alone* are, by the present constitution of Methodism, amenable to special district meetings; and that the application of the judicial and inquisitorial powers of such meetings to officers and members of societies, is a novel and unauthorized extension of their jurisdiction, will appear by a simple reference to the rules of Conference, authorising and empowering such meetings." In reviewing these laws, we launched out into no "new theories;" we indulged in no "speculations;" we brought forward no indefinite and indiscriminate charges; we seized no "new topics of factious declamation;" nor did we, "under pretence of bringing us back to what is *old* in Methodism, covertly endeavour to bring in what is *new*, and essentially opposed to our bond of union; and then factiously



endeavour to disturb our societies by their publication." When you penned these sentences against us, you must have been fully aware that there was not the slightest foundation for them. Let the reader turn to the pages which comprise Part I. of our Address, and to which you have confined your attack; and let him judge for himself, whether a more close, connected, legitimate, and conclusive argument were ever presented to the public. We, indeed, are not surprised at your saying these things; for we are well aware, that this method of treating your opponents constitutes at once the character and the strength of your party. "Throw dirt enough, and some will be sure to stick!" Nor can we be offended at it; because, with all men of candour and common sense, it will be a proof of weakness, and will induce them to throw down the book, as one of gross abuse and wilful misrepresentation!

When we first heard of the proceedings of the special district meeting at Leeds, we were at a loss to know on what law of Methodism they had grounded their right of interference. Long and intimately acquainted with the Plan of Pacification and the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797, we were perfectly aware that none of these *fundamental* statutes of the Connexion afforded the least countenance for such an interference. On the contrary, to our apprehension, they appear to be framed for the express purpose of securing the liberties of the local authorities from any such encroachment of power on the part of the district meetings and travelling preachers, by stripping the former of all authority "but a bare negative;" and making, "on the part of the whole body of the latter, the largest sacrifice in respect of authority."

The resolutions, however, of the special district meeting no sooner appeared, than we perceived that they had founded all their authority on certain Miscellaneous Regulations of the year 1797, relating to district committees; and that, in order to render these regulations subservient to their purpose, they had distorted and perverted them in the manner exemplified in the *second* part of our Address! Never was a case made out against public men more unanswerable; never was there exhibited on the part of Christian ministers an abuse of discipline less justifiable. In proof of this is your silence! You have not a word to say in defence of your brethren, on a single point raised and discussed in Part II. of the London South Address!

But the subject was too important to be rested on a mere exposure of the perversion of a rule. The question, whether special district meetings had authority to overawe and control, in any cases whatever, the local jurisdiction of the circuits, presented a great constitutional question in Methodism. As we have remarked in our Address (p. 19), "this was the first great and general attempt to systematise and consolidate the *judicial* power of special district meetings in *local* affairs." As this attempt, then, was founded on the rules relating to special district meetings, we deemed it necessary to overturn the "baseless fabric," by collecting and reviewing all the laws of Conference relating to such meetings, with the view of showing that they conveyed no such authority, and conferred no such jurisdiction as had been claimed and exercised at Leeds. The method we took, was to set down, under the several years of their enactment, a true and literal copy of the rules made in each successive year from the commencement of district meetings. To the regulations thus set down under each year, we applied certain universally received rules



of construction, derived from the maxims of the civil law. These rules are nothing more than the collective wisdom and common sense of mankind, expressed in self-evident propositions. They are equally applicable to all laws, civil, ecclesiastical, and municipal. They have been acknowledged and adopted by all civilized nations; and, like the tried proverbs of mankind, have passed current in every age. Under the Conference regulations of each year, we have added a few remarks in application of these simple rules of construction; but these remarks, it will be perceived, except when successively repeated, apply only to the regulations of that particular year under which they are ranged.

Now, we ask whether any course of argument could be more fair and just, more candid and honourable? The reader has the rules before him, and can judge for himself as to their sense and meaning. We did not think it either fair or honourable to pick out detached sentences from the rules, and interpolate them in our text, that they might carry with them some particular gloss which might serve our purpose better than the rule itself. In every case we have given the rule entire and distinct. Our own remarks we have confined to separate paragraphs; and have left them to stand or fall, in the judgment of the reader, according to their own merits. Here, then, there is no attack upon Methodism; nor upon the Conference; nor on the laws of the Connexion. We take the laws relating to special district meetings as we find them. We have no quarrel with them whatever; we inquire not into their validity, their propriety, or fitness. Our whole question is simply one of construction,—What do these laws mean? What authority do they convey? Any general argument on the policy or tendencies of these laws is employed by us only in relation to your construction. Yet to read your book, one must really suppose that there exists, in this circuit, a party who are seeking, by dark and disingenuous methods, to overturn the system and destroy Methodism! It is your studied purpose to fix this impression on the minds of your readers! You do not merely insinuate this from page to page, but there are passages in which it is directly asserted. We shall not stop to refute so base a slander, nor to inquire how you could stoop to retail it. Our knowledge of the character of your party, and the abusive resolutions, both of the Leeds Special District Meeting and of the late Conference, led us to expect that we should be treated as the off-scouring of all things. But we undertook all these labours, and have braved all this contumely and reproach in defence of the liberties of the Methodist Connexion. We saw and felt, as thousands of others at this moment do, that it was high time to make a stand, and to give a check to your encroachments; and notwithstanding the great anxiety of yourself and your brethren to give out, that with the most intelligent and charactered members of the body, our address and resolutions “meet a most unequivocal condemnation;”<sup>\*</sup> yet, under this sickly

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<sup>\*</sup> This empty boast, that all “the most intelligent and charactered members” are enlisted in your train, forcibly reminds us of the following passage from Lord Bacon:—

“The church never wanted a kind of persons which love the salutation of Rabbi, master; not in ceremony or compliment, but in an inward authority which they seek over men’s minds, in drawing them to depend upon their opinions, and to seek knowledge at their lips. These men are the true successors of Diotrophes, the lover of pre-eminence. Such spirits do light upon another sort of natures, which do adhere to these men; ‘quorum gloria in obsequio;’ stiff followers, and such as zeal marvellously for those whom they have chosen for their

colouring, there is an uneasy soreness which betrays the truth. Do these intelligent and charactered members approve the Leeds business? Have several of the first and most important circuits, who have as yet taken no part in the discussions, been backward to express their opinion on this case, when it has been proposed at their quarterly meetings to invite to their circuits preachers who figured most conspicuously in the Leeds business? We aver, that amongst your most zealous friends, who, in compassion to you, would have us be silent, we have not met with one who would undertake to defend you through all the parts of that case. Neither, when disabused of your sophistries, will they by any means admit the principles on which you found the new jurisdiction and powers of special district meetings. It requires time, however, before so large a body of people can be brought to examine the character, and estimate the tendencies of a new principle. The multitude are ever moved less by reason and reflection, than by passion and feeling. The other circuits, as at Leeds, will pronounce correctly upon your new system, so soon as they shall have experienced its operation. A few more special district meetings, interfering with local affairs, would do all that is required. If we desired the overthrow of the Conference, as you seem to intimate, we could wish nothing more than that you should go on, and carry into practical effect the principles which you have laid down. It required six years after Mr. Wesley's death to rouse the Connexion to the assertion of their liberties; but, if you would not be quite so sparing of your labours in this way, if you would be so kind as to assist us with a few more displays of your newly assumed powers, it would not require half that time to induce the Connexion to resume those liberties. In the meantime, we await the issue with but one feeling of apprehension, which we have expressed in the conclusion of our Address to the Conference, viz., that when the crisis comes, and the long obstructed torrent bursts, it may sweep away more than we should wish to see destroyed. As, however, you are the authors of that "root of bitterness" which has sprung up in the Connexion, so you must bear the responsibility and the blame! No apprehension of consequences, which may by possibility result from your obstinate and pertinacious adherence to your novel, unscriptural, and anti-Methodistical claims, will deter reasonable and intelligent men from asserting their own rights, and defending the liberties of the church! Our own circuit we have protected by our seventh resolution, and as to our characters and proceedings, we commend them to the judgment of the Methodist Connexion. That Connexion alone can be the judges; for, notwithstanding you are fond of an appeal to the Methodist Conference, as to an immaculate tribunal, yet we must remind you, that in this case the Conference is strongly interested and deeply committed. The clergy have ever thought it a fine thing, both to legislate and to decide judicially on their own claims and pretensions. But this will hardly go down in the present day. The Leeds case is a sufficient illustration of the folly and injustice of permitting the Conference to annex to their *ministerial* authority, not only a *legislative*, but also a *judicial*

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masters. This latter sort, for the most part, are men of young years and superficial understanding, carried away with partial respect of persons, or with the enticing appearance of godly names and pretences; 'Pauci res ipsas sequuntur, plures nomina rerum, plurimi nomina magistrorum,' 'few follow the things themselves, more the names of the things, and most the names of their masters.'—Works, vol. ii. p. 492.

power over the people; we have denied the existence of such an authority in the Conference; and we have rested that denial, not on speculative grounds, but on the *fundamental* laws of the Connexion. In thus appealing to the judgment of the public, we find our own construction of those laws so strengthened and confirmed by your very tortuous, crooked, and perverse attempts to overturn it, that we can have no fears as to the result.

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VI.

VII. As introductory to our review of the rules of Conference relative to special district meetings, and as furnishing an important, but by no means an essential or necessary, evidence of their true import or design, we stated two facts, which we did suppose no man would have attempted to deny or controvert, in the face of the Methodist Connexion. Having remarked that district meetings, *ordinary* as well as *special*, were unknown to the Connexion during Mr. Wesley's life; that for nearly fifty years after the commencement of Methodism they had no existence; and that, during this period, leaders' meetings, local preachers' meetings, and quarterly meetings, had become universally established and acknowledged;—remarks which you do not attempt to question;—we go on to state,—“During this period, the judicial power of the Conference had been limited and confined (according to the 8th Article of the Deed of Declaration of the 28th of February, 1784, by which Mr. Wesley defined the powers of the Conference) to the trial and expulsion of *members of the Conference admitted into Connexion, or upon trial*. They had never presumed, nor been allowed, to cite at their bar the local officers and members of society; such a citation was never heard of; nor can it be believed, that at this period any leaders' meeting would have lent its authority to compel any of its members to appear, and answer charges, before either the Conference or a special district meeting. The leaders' meetings always retained in their own hands the inalienable right of the church to try its own members; a right distinctly recognised in the New Testament, and uniformly exercised in the primitive church. The Conference has the same right *as to its own members, but not being of itself a church*, it could not pretend to the right of trying the members of any church.”

The bare mention of the two facts, that the judicial power of the Conference had been limited to its own members, and that the leaders' meeting had always retained the right of trying their own members, appears to move you from all your propriety; and you cast about the symbols of your wrath to an excess which is somewhat ludicrous! It was necessary to get over these two facts in one way or another; and, therefore, we have, in the first place, a string of epithets, and a world of abuse, highly befitting the subject and the occasion! But now for the argument. Let us hear what you have to oppose to these equally culpable assertions. Transposing the order of our facts, you tell us, “The writer of your Address either knew, or ought to have known, that Mr. Wesley and the superintendents after him, although they took counsel of others, as wishing only to employ their power righteously, yet had the power, and often exercised it, to admit, expel, and remove from office, without any reference to such meetings at all.” This is so much broad assertion; but in stating the fact, we challenged the production of some authority. It is clear you have none to produce: no case which you can cite. Here, then, you are

answered ; for our assertion is as good as yours. It is, indeed, much better ; for we assert nothing "without proof ;" "for we would not follow so bad an example" as you have set us. Take, then, the proof of our assertion :—

"The preachers have EVER appointed leaders, chosen stewards, and admitted members into, and expelled them from, the society, *consulting their brethren, the leaders, and stewards.*"—*Minutes of Conference*, 1794, 8vo edit., vol. i. p. 299.

"It has been our *general custom* NEVER to appoint or remove a leader or steward, *without first consulting the leaders* and stewards of the society, and we are resolved to walk by the same rule."—Addenda to the Plan of Pacification—*Minutes of Conference*, 1795, vol. i. p. 325.

What now, we ask, are we to think when, in the teeth of the above declarations of successive Conferences, you gravely tell us that we ought to have known that Mr. Wesley and the superintendents after him exercised this power of admission and expulsion, "*without any reference to such meetings at all*"!!! Can we be any longer surprised that we should have been loaded with such unmeasured abuse and insult? When fact and argument fail, and a bad cause is to be upheld by bold assurance and hardy assertion, the advocates of truth must expect to suffer for its sake!

Observe, again, that both the above citations occur in the Minutes of Conference held previous to 1797; and yet you have the face to tell us, "no such right was ever given to the meetings before 1797! Nay, this power in superintendents was the point complained of when what you call the Constitution was settled, as appears from so many plain words which no one can mistake; and was the very thing conceded by the Conference to those local meetings *for the first time!*" Where are the plain words which no one can mistake? We asserted that the leaders "*always*" retained this right. The Conference declare they have "*ever*" consulted—that it has been their custom "*NEVER*" to appoint, to remove, &c., without first consulting, &c. Did you ever read the Plan of Pacification? We ask this question because, if you had carefully read that document yourself (which may be doubted), and did not implicitly follow some unfaithful guide (which we fear), you must have seen, "that the right which you say was first given to leaders' meetings in 1797," was not, indeed, then "*conceded by the Conference for the first time,*" but that two years before it had been acknowledged by the Conference to have *ever* existed in those meetings, by "*general custom, and never departed from.*" We have borrowed your style and language on this occasion, to show you how ridiculous it is to affect to treat men as children because you cannot answer them. But you were not ignorant, that in attempting to shake the main fact stated by us, you attempted to befool the understandings of your readers, and to overturn the existing practice and established usage of Methodism "*from the beginning.*" You know very well, not only that Mr. Wesley, and the superintendents after him, constantly referred to and consulted the leaders' meeting on all such matters; but that the consultation was not a mockery of civility and courtesy, but a direct appeal to the sense and judgment of these meetings, who decided the matter by an effective vote. You knew that the point complained of in 1797 was not this pretended power of the superintendent, which in fact never existed; but it was that certain "*heady and opinionated men*" (we thank you for your vocabulary of terms),

amongst the preachers, began then to question the right of the leaders meeting in this matter, and to set up those claims to spiritual power and authority, which "the giants" of 1795 and 1797 indignantly rejected, but which you have again the hardihood to revive and enforce. If, as you tell us, Mr. Wesley, and the superintendent after him, thus acknowledged leaders' meetings, "as wishing only to employ their power righteously," how can you avoid the just inference, that your very great anxiety to get rid of this right, can only be "as wishing to employ your power *unrighteously*!"

But there is a deeper "sophistry" couched in this denial of the right of leaders' meetings, which we must not omit to mention. Of the power of Mr. Wesley and the superintendents after him, we shall probably treat hereafter. But Mr. Wesley and the superintendents, when they exercised this power, were then present with the society, as its acknowledged ministers or pastors. Here, then, you have nimbly skipped on one side to avoid the question, instead of meeting it. That question relates not to what a minister may do in a congregation or society over which he has a special charge; but to the right of a corporation, like the Conference, or a district meeting, to interfere between the minister and his flock. The Conference was in full power under the Deed of 1784, for some years before the death of Mr. Wesley. Did they ever pretend to the right of stepping in betwixt him, or the superintendent, and the local authorities, during the intervals of their annual meeting? And why have you omitted all notice of our three remaining propositions: that this right of the church to try its own members is distinctly recognised in the New Testament; that it was uniformly exercised in the primitive church; and that the Conference, not being a church, could not pretend to the right of trying the members of any church? "How disingenuous, then, in the face of so clear a fact (a fact supported by uniform practice in Methodism, and fully admitted by several Conferences), to assert the contrary, in order to bolster up a futile argument!"

On the remaining fact stated by us, we have still nothing better than broad assertion and abuse, without a shadow of proof; and an argument (if argument it may be called) still more ridiculous. We copy the passage literally. "Equally culpable is the assertion, 'that, during this period, the judicial power of the Conference itself had been *limited* and *confined* (according to the eighth article of the Deed of Declaration of 1784, by which Mr. Wesley defined the powers of the Conference) to the trial and expulsion of members of the Conference, admitted into connexion, or received on trial.' Now, to '*define*,' is truly understood by your Address-writer to mean, to '*limit* or *confine*;' but in this article of the Deed there is no act of *limitation*. It is a clause to give power, not to define power. 'The Conference *shall* and *may* expel and put out any member thereof,' &c. The clause has nothing therefore to do with the question."—Watson, p. 24.

There could be no necessity to tell us that the English language is truly understood by our Address-writer; but if you had as truly understood the law of *ellipsis*, and the rule of syntax, which connects the relative with its antecedent, you could not have added "to *define*, is truly understood to mean, to limit or confine, but in this article of the Deed there is no act of limitation." You would have seen in a moment, that the antecedent of the relative "which," was "Deed of Declaration," and not the "eighth article" of that Deed; and that the plain grammatical structure of the sentence was, "according to the eighth article



of the Deed of Declaration, by which *deed* (not by which *article*) Mr. Wesley *defined* the powers of the Conference." The argument is, that during the long period alluded to, the judicial power of the Conference had, in *fact* and *practice*, been limited and confined to their own members, and that this practice agreed with the power given them in the eighth article of the Deed of Declaration.

But the defects of early education, even in men who acquire studious habits in after life, extend much beyond occasional blunders in grammar. It is by early discipline alone that the mind acquires that precision of thought and distinctness of ideas which distinguish the scholar; and while they adorn the pages of the classic writer, enable him both to adorn and instruct his country and his age. Here, then, we are mortified to perceive that your coin is counterfeit, and that the tinsel falls off on a single touch. We can assure you, that notwithstanding the gross abuse of your pamphlet, notwithstanding you have called in question, not merely our fairness and honesty, but even our sagacity and common sense, and have officiously undertaken "to correct our vanity;" yet it is with pain that we allude to defects, which constitute, probably, rather your misfortune than your fault. But self-defence is a duty, and truth requires that, in an important argument, a glaring fallacy should not be overlooked. Take, then, as a specimen, of which your book would furnish not a few, the description you have given of this eighth article of the Deed of Declaration. You say, "it is a clause to give power, not to define power." Now, it would be hardly necessary to remind any one else, that power given by deed or grant, does not signify *physical* power. It simply means *authority*. But what distinct notion can be formed of a grant of authority which is not defined? Suppose you call your servant, and say to him, "John, I give you authority," without defining that authority in relation either to its subject or its object. Will he not inquire, "Authority, Sir! what to do?" You rejoin: "It is enough that I give you authority, I condescend not to define that authority; begone, and put it in force!" All this might appear very wonderful, and, if conveyed with your wonted gravity, very astounding to the poor fellow. But pray how much authority do you think he would carry away with him? It is a maxim, with which you are evidently not acquainted, that "in order to give power you must define it; and where authority is not defined, none is given." The want of distinct ideas, arising from the defect we have mentioned, has led you into an absurdity which this maxim was designed to correct.

What is still more extraordinary and confused is, that in proof of your singular position, that "in this article of the Deed there is no act of limitation; it is a clause to give power, not to define power;" you immediately quote the language of the clause in which the power given is both limited and defined! Thus your proof flatly contradicts your argument! "The Conference shall and may expel and put out (here is the definition of the authority) any member thereof" (here is the limitation of the power). The authority then given by this clause is expressly (yes, *expressly too!*—Watson, p. 26) defined, as to its subject, to be the trial of preachers; and it is as expressly limited, as to its objects, to the members of the Conference.

We are, however, agreeably surprised to find that all this singular logic results in the following very candid admission:—"No one need be told that the Conference never did try leaders and members before its own bar, but before the meetings it has appointed for that purpose."



Strip this sentence of its wayward phraseology, and it concedes the whole question at issue. The fact stated by us related to the long period in early Methodism during which district meetings had no existence. The meetings here referred to, as appointed to try leaders and members, can therefore be none other than the leaders' meetings. Here, then, is a plain and direct admission of the very fact you profess to combat. Satisfied with this admission, we shall not quarrel with you about words and phantasies. If it had been your humour to assert the right of the Emperor of China to try our leaders and members, the conceit would only have amused us, provided it had been followed by the admission, that he tried them, not at his own bar, but before the proper Methodistical meetings. We must remark, however, that it is certainly a new conceit in Methodism to assert, that leaders' meetings are the representatives of the Conference, "appointed by it for the trial of leaders and members." They unquestionably appeared in a different character in 1797, and were then recognised as the representatives of the people. In the Plan of Pacification they are regarded as "best qualified to give the sense" and "to testify the wish of the people;" and so far from regarding themselves as the agents of the Conference in 1797, they then set up their claim to this very right of trying their own members, not on behalf of, but in direct opposition to the Conference; and this right, thus claimed, the Conference fully conceded them. But you seem to look back wistfully at "olden time," and struggling hard to revive the absolute system, we are all to be treated as the vassals of the Conference! Notwithstanding the above admission, therefore, you proceed,—

"But that the Conference always had the power, appears from its having exercised it in former times, without any one dreaming that it went beyond its authority." Here again is broad assertion; but when, where, did the Conference exercise these powers? You have just told us, that the Conference never did try leaders and members at its own bar; and you do not attempt to show that even district meetings, after their establishment in 1791, ever exercised that power; you refer not to a single case; nay, at page 19, you ask us, "Did you ever know your officers or members tried, suspended, or expelled by the Conference, by a district meeting, or even by a superintendent, since 1797, on his own authority?" And you emphatically reply, "You never did!" Will you have the goodness to reconcile this alleged exercise of power with this positive denial of it? Where are your authorities? We repeat the question:—When, where, and through whom were these powers exercised by the Conference in former times? Certainly the men of 1795 and 1797 were no dreamers; when special district meetings attempted, in their day, to exercise such a power, they rose up manfully, and put down the dangerous encroachment! But you persist, that the Conference always had this power,—

"From the very nature of its relation to the Societies as vested, by common interest, with the government of the whole body." A very pretty argument, from which you may readily deduce any right, power, or pretension, which you may choose to set up against the liberties of the Connexion! What is there that a *common*, that is an *absolute*, government may not do? But, alas! the men of 1797 consented to no such thing. They demanded, and obtained from the Conference, the largest "sacrifices, in respect to authority, on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers;" nay, what is still more

direct, this Conference declare, "Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our *executive government* into your hands, as represented in your different public meetings."—Minutes, vol. i. p. 376, 1797. Was this investing the Conference, "by *common consent*, with the government of the whole body?" We really are ashamed to be compelled to go on, before other churches and the world, -exposing these sad perversions and tergiversations of a Methodist preacher! Government must be according to law; and law, to be of any avail, must be stronger than the passions of men in office.\* The government of this nation has a relation to the whole body of the people. But what ministry would dare to interfere with the jurisdiction of the courts of judicature, or with the sacred right of trial by jury? Equally dangerous to the power of the Conference will be a continued interference, by special district meetings, with the local jurisdictions of the circuits!

"———, also from the constitution of 1797, where it delegates its own powers to its president, to the chairman of the districts, and to the district committees to interfere in such cases, and to execute the laws." Was ever effrontery carried further? There is not a word or a hint of any such delegation of power, in any part of the Constitution of 1797! All the phrases you have quoted, are from the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797, which have no more to do with "the Constitution of 1797," than any other act of the same Conference, with which the delegates of that year had no concern! Whether these Miscellaneous Regulations contain any such delegation of power to interfere with the local jurisdictions; that is, whether they contradict and overturn the Concessions and Code of Laws of that year, is the question at issue, to which we shall presently return; but, in asserting any such delegation of power as above, you do but "beg the question," in order to establish a breach of faith on the part of the Conference of 1797.

The two introductory facts, then, stated by us remain untouched. They relate not to district meetings, for they had then no existence; and this shows the folly of your last argument from the Constitution of 1797, which cannot apply to the period of which we spake. But "the Conference," as you tell us, "never did try leaders and members before its own bar." It had no such jurisdiction, nor any pretensions to this power; but, as the Conference of 1794 and 1795 affirm, "It has always been the *general custom never* to appoint or remove a leader or steward, without first consulting the leaders and stewards." The leaders' meeting always retained in their own hands the inalienable right of the church to try its own members! Under these circumstances, you very properly wind up this diatribe of "paltry sophistry," by admitting "that triad of principles, in the seventh page of our Address, by the magical touch of which," we have dragged your "darkness into day" (we correct a transposition into which your petulance has betrayed you). The Conference never did possess such power; such power it could not therefore delegate; and, by consequence, there can be no question of doubtful application, and your artful construction of the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797 must give place to a construction more conformable to the Constitution, that is, to the Concessions and Code of Laws of that year.

VIII. Our attention is now more particularly due to this attempt,

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\* "Imperia legum potentiora quam hominum."—Liv. l. i. c. 2.

on your part, to blend and confound the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797, relating to district meetings, with the Constitution, that is, "the Concessions and Code of Laws" of that year.

Commenting on these Miscellaneous Regulations, and after quoting the fourth of them you remark, "Now this you call 'the Constitution of 1797,' which, you say in your resolutions, it is the object of your Address to maintain. But you blow hot and cold in this matter; for instead of 'maintaining' this Constitution, you reject everything in it which does not please you; and you set up a principle in direct opposition, not to its spirit only, but to its very letter." "If you really wish constitutional Methodism, here it is in the Minutes of 1795 and 1797: but you spurn it, and yet say you wish to maintain Methodism! It would have been much more honest to have said, 'We want a new constitution for Methodism,' which is the fact."—Watson, p. 17, 18.

Omitting a great deal of mere abuse, we have quoted the above passages, because, when we suspect a man, we always think it an advantage to hear him talk. And now allow us to inquire, 1. Is this 4th of the Miscellaneous Regulations a *constitutional* regulation? Is it a regulation at all; or is it a mere recommendation by the Conference to the superintendent? 2. When and where did we ever call these Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797 "the *Constitution of 1797*?" how came you to venture on this assertion? 3. In what part, either of our Address or resolutions, have we spurned either the Constitution, or the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797? You were perfectly aware, when you wrote this deceptive paragraph, that we spurned nothing but your novel and interested construction of these regulations! Whether the principle we have laid down be opposed to the Constitution of 1797, or only to your construction, is the question at issue, the decision of which must not be left to your modesty and virtue? 4. On your last assertion, that "we want a new constitution for Methodism," after the solemn declarations of the circuit to the contrary, we can bestow nothing but contempt.

We must now beg leave to tell you that nothing can be admitted as belonging to the Constitution of 1797, which did not pass in treaty between the delegates of that year and the Conference. Did these Miscellaneous Regulations so pass? Were they ever introduced or read in the Committee of Delegates, until after they had been actually passed into law by the Conference? The third of these regulations, and the third *only*, appears then, indeed, to have been communicated to the delegates in answer to a question on the case at Bristol. In that case, the societies had been divided, and each party was headed by preachers. This, then, was a case with which the local authorities could not deal, because they had no jurisdiction over these preachers. The preachers, who thus headed the several parties at Bristol, were amongst the oldest and most influential preachers in the Connexion; and the Plan of Pacification had not contemplated such a division amongst the *preachers*, as, in fact, in that particular case, frustrated its execution. We forbear to mention names, but between such parties, it was justly apprehended that the district meeting itself might have great difficulty in deciding. This accounts for the rule for strengthening the district meeting, by calling in three of the nearest superintendents. But, from the fact that the delegates recorded on their minutes the communication of this third regulation only, and make no mention of the others, it should seem, that the others were not communicated to them at all. This, we believe, is generally

admitted to have been the fact, and it is more than probable, from the nature of most of these regulations. The fifth, for instance, relates to the election of the chairman of districts, by ballot of the Conference. Was this a matter of treaty between the Conference and the delegates? These Miscellaneous Regulations, moreover, relate not merely to district meetings, but to "the book concerns," and other matters, with which the delegates had nothing to do. Did the Conference, then, *ex gratia* and unasked, submit these concerns, over which they have ever manifested a peculiar jealousy, to the consideration of the delegates? You are not ignorant that the delegates of 1797 had no hand in either framing or agreeing to those regulations; and which, until perverted by you, were never held or supposed to have any relation to the people, except as regarded disturbances occasioned in a circuit by a preacher. The more these regulations are examined, in connexion with the situation of the Conference, and the circumstances of the Connexion at that period, the more convincingly will it appear, that their true object was to give to district meetings, on behalf of the Conference, greater power over individual preachers in the intervals between the Conferences. Several preachers had thrown their circuits into utter confusion on the sacrament question; and others had made such displays of their imaginary power and spiritual authority, that the Connexion had been twice roused, and the Conference twice compelled to enter into treaty with general meetings of lay delegates. It was necessary to put a stop to these convulsions; not by overbearing and beating down the local meetings, as at Leeds, but by empowering the President, in conjunction with the district, to deal summarily with these turbulent preachers, and "to redress the grievances" of the people, before it should be necessary to call into operation the Plan of Pacification. But all this was the act of the Conference, for its own preservation, and not the Constitution of 1797; and therefore, as we have before observed, these Miscellaneous Regulations relating to districts, appeared only in the Large Minutes, for the government of the preachers; and were never, in any way whatever, connected with the Concessions and Code of Laws for the government of the people. We are acquainted with some of those who were engaged in the treaty of 1797, and who regard this attempt to foist in these Miscellaneous Regulations as a part of the Constitutions of that year, as one of the most disreputable efforts!

The Constitution of 1797, as we have already explained, consists of the stipulations or concessions, contained in the printed circular, addressed by the Conference to the Societies, dated Leeds, August 7th, 1797; and of the collection or code of laws therein referred to, and which was "*voluntarily and in good faith*," signed by 145 preachers present at the Conference, "*as approving of and engaging to comply therewith*."—The printed circular concludes with the following paragraph:—"We have represented these measures, which we have taken for your satisfaction, in as concise a manner as we well could, giving you the sense of *the whole*, not only for brevity's sake, but for expedition; that you may be informed of the general heads of our proceedings as soon as possible. In the regulations,\* which

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\* Our attention has just been directed to a passage in Mr. Beecham's Essay on the Constitution of Wesleyan Methodism; in which, quoting this passage, he tells us, page 58, that the regulations here referred to, as containing "*the whole at large*," are the Miscellaneous Regulations; and that these regulations "*are the*

will be published *with the Rules of the Society* as mentioned above, you will have the *whole at large*." Accordingly, this CODE OF LAWS, containing "*the whole—the whole at large*," all that we call "the Constitution of 1797," was so published *with the Rules of the Society*, shortly after the Conference. But, as you know perfectly well, from beginning to end, either of the Concessions, or the Code of Laws, there is not an allusion to, nor even a hint of the Miscellaneous Regulations. This charter of Methodistical liberty contains not a word nor a syllable about the power of district meetings to interfere in any cases, ordinary or extraordinary, in the affairs of a circuit, or in the trial of local officers and members. On the contrary, the assumed authority of special district meetings, which had constituted one of the chief grounds of complaint, was most anxiously disclaimed by the Conference in those Concession. "Such have been the sacrifices we have made," say they, "that our district committees have hardly any authority remaining." Nay, so very objectionable was this power in that day, that the Conference thought it necessary to remind the societies that, even *in the trial of preachers*, they might, "according to the Plan of Pacification, in every instance in which the trustees, leaders, and stewards chose to interfere, supersede, in a great measure, the regular district committees;" and which implies, that if the trustees, leaders, and stewards did not think it necessary to interfere, then the district committee would themselves deal with the accused preacher, according to the powers entrusted to them in these Miscellaneous and other former Regulations. In the absence of such interference, the trial of preachers was the proper duty and business of these district committees; but as to the trial of local officers and members, their assumed power in this respect was clearly, and without

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things to which the Conference refers, as completing the arrangements which it had made." A moment's reflection refutes this error. 1. The Conference say, "in the Regulations which will be published *with the Rules of the Society*, as above mentioned, you will have the whole at large." Now, *above* they had not mentioned the Miscellaneous Regulations at all; but they had stated their determination, "that all the rules which relate to the societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and quarterly meetings [being the rules so 'carefully revised' and subscribed by them], should be published with the Rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members." 2. They were to be published *with the Rules of the Society*. The Miscellaneous Regulations never were so published; they appeared only in the Minutes of the Conference, and were never connected with the Rules of the Society. 3. But the revised "Collection of Rules or Code of Laws," so far as regarded the people, were actually published *with the Rules of the Society*, shortly after the Conference of 1797, and they still appear thus connected, in our class-books. 4. These Miscellaneous Regulations do not contain the "*whole at large*;" they contain scarcely anything relating to the societies, leaders, stewards, &c. &c., or of the several matters mentioned in the printed circular; but the "Code of Laws," thus published, embodies all the particulars of this circular, with the *additional* matters; and thus contains "*the whole at large*." 5. Lastly, as though to preclude all uncertainty and the possibility of mistake, this article (Art. 6) of the circular, was prefixed to the first and every succeeding edition of the "Code of Laws," with a declaration that the same was published "*in execution thereof*." We do not accuse Mr. Beecham of *intentional* error in thus altogether throwing on one side the Code of Laws, and substituting the Miscellaneous Regulations; but it is one of those blunders which effectually destroy the authority of his book, by proving that he does not understand his subject, and is too careless to be correct. The exposure of this blunder overturns also the main principle of the party, that the Miscellaneous Regulations were contemplated in the Concessions, as the provision for extraordinary cases, with reference to the people.



any exception or reserve, given up and determined by the Concessions and Code of Laws. Here, then, in the Code of Laws thus published with the Rules of the Society, we have, according to the Conference of 1797, and as far as the people are concerned, "the whole—the whole at large!"—"That is all a mistake," quoth the Rev. R. Watson, in 1829! "The most important thing of all, the provision in extraordinary cases, has been quite overlooked! Here is the Constitution of 1797; not in the Concessions or Code of Laws, but in certain Miscellaneous Regulations relating to district meetings. If you really wish constitutional Methodism, here it is, in the Miscellaneous Regulations!" We are told that your book is to pass into law at the next Conference; but remember, Mr. Vevers's principle will not be forgotten, "the Conference itself has not the power to make or promulgate any new law, which shall change or affect the Constitution of Methodism."

IX. We notice, in the next place, another infusion of the genuine spirit of your party. It is the affectation which pervades your whole book, of not being able to understand whether, in objecting to this usurped and oppressive jurisdiction of special district meetings, we intend also to oppose their proper and constitutional authority, under the Plan of Pacification and the Regulations of 1797. If there be one point plainer than another in the London South Address, it is this very point, propounded in the first sentence of Part I. of that Address—viz., "That travelling preachers alone are, by the present constitution of Methodism, amenable to special district meetings," &c. In commenting on the rules on this subject, we not only incessantly point out this proper and lawful jurisdiction, but we emphatically quote the rules in *italics*, to draw attention to it. (See London South Address, p. 6.) Nay, it is the gist of our argument, that the object of these rules was to establish this jurisdiction, and not the one for which you contend. We have not space for quotation, but let the reader turn to the concluding paragraph of Part I., and to the summary of our arguments on the Rule of 1796, given in p. 13, 14 of our Address to the Conference.

Mistake, then, on this part of the subject was impossible; and the affectation of it would have been utterly childish and ridiculous, had it not been for the lurking design which it was intended to cover. No man, reading the London South Address, ever did imagine or suspect that we wished to do away with the proper and lawful jurisdiction of special district meetings; and yet, affecting darkness in the face of the sun, you go on to interrogate us, "When you dwell upon the case of a special district meeting interfering to take cognisance of proceedings on the part of leaders, stewards, and local preachers at Leeds, and from that take occasion to exclaim against all such interference with the local affairs of a circuit, did you, my brethren, intend to exclaim against all such interferences of every kind in the affairs of circuits?" You then explain your motive for asking this question: "Because in the Rules of Pacification and the Regulations of 1797, you must have seen that the Plan of Pacification gives to a majority of trustees, or to the majority of the stewards and leaders of any society, the power of calling such [no, not *such*] a special meeting of the district, in order to try any preacher appointed for the circuit, on charges of immorality, [false doctrine,] deficient abilities, or violation of rule; of which meeting the trustees, stewards, and leaders are to be members; so that if the charges are considered to be proved by the majority of that meeting, he may be removed



from the circuit"—"did you then intend to renounce that privilege in your zeal against special district meetings? If you did [you knew we did not], this is in proof that you must have aimed, not at the preservation of Methodism, as settled in 1795 and 1797, but at some quite *new* system, which would have involved greater projects of change than perhaps you were aware of, but which were not unthought of by those who penned your Address and Resolutions."—Watson, p. 15.

To this last sentence, knowing, as you could not but know, that the whole bent and aim of our Address was to point out this proper design and provision of special district meetings, in opposition to "*the novel and unauthorized extension of their jurisdiction*" attempted at Leeds, it were beneath us to offer any reply. Here is, first, an affectation of mistake, where none could be made; next, a wilful perversion of acknowledged truth into hypothetical falsehood; and all this labour of darkness is to make way for a piece of foul and wilful slander! We refer you here to a higher tribunal than that of the Conference—a tribunal which has said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour!"

The artifice of the above interrogation, several times repeated, is sufficiently apparent. Coming forward in defence of an odious and tyrannical assumption of power on the part of special district meetings, and aware that it will not do to plead for them on any of the facts of the Leeds case, you attempt to borrow a little credit for such meetings, on cases in which it is allowed that they are both useful and necessary. You spread out and detail the advantages of special district meetings in cases which are not questioned, and then, as though all were gained, you surprise the reader with the inquiry,— "Did you, then, intend to renounce that privilege in your zeal against special district meetings? You never could intend to give up this protection to yourselves without some substitute for it?" Alas! the great objection to all this is, its repugnance to that simplicity and sincerity which we expect in a minister of Jesus Christ! You knew very well that we intended nothing of the kind; but that, on the contrary, these provisions of the Plan of Pacification were an essential part of that constitution of Methodism which we were anxious to maintain! You knew this, and therefore you were prepared for the reply; and, with a dexterity becoming the disreputable game you play, in the very next sentence you seek to turn the tables.

"If, however, you did not intend to renounce this privilege, you did not intend to denounce all special district meetings, and all interferences with the local affairs of a circuit!" Admirable discovery! but what next? "You would keep the privilege of using special district meetings to try the cases of preachers, and to remove them; and you disclaim them only when they are called to repress faction and disorder among the people. Brethren, is that fair dealing?—You claim liberty for yourselves, but I pray you on whom do you put the yoke?" Oh! Richard Watson! Richard Watson! in the yoke at last! It is hard work! to be sure; but why did you not explain to the reader this provision of the Plan of Pacification, and contrast it with the constitution, claims, and conduct of the Leeds Special District Meeting, that he might judge of our fair dealing, and of the grievous yoke of which you complain? Why did you not inform him, that when the complaints against a preacher had become so loud and general, as to induce the trustees, leaders, and stewards to rise up against him; and when the case was so clear and conclusive, that the majority of a meeting, in which his

brethren, the preachers of the whole district, would form, in all probability, the more numerous party, were compelled to decide against him;—yet, after all, the power of this mixed district meeting extended no further than to effect a mere “change of preachers,” by removing the obnoxious preacher from the circuit. If the case be a flagrant one;—if the question be, whether the offender shall continue a Methodist preacher, all the laymen must instantly withdraw; and the travelling preachers of the district alone, “shall determine *among themselves* how the removed preacher shall be disposed of till the Conference; and shall have authority to suspend the said preacher from all public duties till the Conference, *if they judge proper!*” To make the cases parallel, therefore, the special district meeting at Leeds should only have had power to remove a leader from one class to another; but the question being one of expulsion from office, the travelling preachers ought to have withdrawn altogether, and to have left that question to be determined by the brethren of the accused, the leaders, *among themselves*. This would have been fair dealing, if you please.

Let it not be supposed that we exclaim against the fair principle laid down in the Plan of Pacification. We lay no yoke upon any man. *We think that the highly constitutional principle, that every man shall be tried by his peers, by men of the same rank and station with himself, and which is one of the great bulwarks of British liberty and law, is also just and equitable in Methodism.* We allow it in full to you, and we claim it but partially for ourselves! Is this fair dealing? Is this putting a yoke upon you? What must the reader think when he finds that after a preacher has rendered himself so very obnoxious in a circuit, that neither his brethren of the circuit, nor all the preachers of the district, with all their influence as ministers, and with each a vote, can save him from condemnation; yet, after all, this convicted preacher can still demand to be tried by his peers, by travelling preachers alone; and that they have power not only to continue him in his office, but to reward him (possibly for some attack on the liberties of the people) by appointing him to a better circuit than the one from which he is removed? What, we repeat, must the reader think of your question of fair dealing, when he learns, that in no case can a private member or local officer demand this right of being tried by his peers; for that in the leaders’ meeting, before which the trial takes place, the superintendent preacher is, *ex officio*, chairman; and all the travelling preachers of the circuit are entitled to attend and vote? Can any man suppress a feeling of indignation on discovering that, not satisfied with this immense advantage over the laity, all your whining about fair dealing, and wincing at a pretended yoke, is because we deny your right to pour in a multitude of preachers from the surrounding district, to coerce the decisions of the leaders’ meeting, and to force your arbitrary measures down the throats of the people. This was the case at Leeds!

But we thank you for recalling our attention to the Plan of Pacification. The men of 1795 and 1797, twice roused from their homes, and compelled to assemble from all parts of the kingdom in defence of their liberties, did not leave themselves exposed to this interference of special district meetings. After all these provisions respecting travelling preachers, the eighth and last article under the second head of the Plan of Pacification expressly secures to every local preachers, trustee, steward, and leader, this right of trial by his peers, subject only to the

interference of the travelling preachers of the circuit, and not to those of the district. "If any local preacher, trustee, steward, or leader, shall disturb the peace of the society, &c. the superintendent of the circuit, or the majority of the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the society so disturbed, shall have authority to summon a meeting of the travelling preachers of the circuit, and the trustees, stewards, and leaders of that society. Evidence shall be examined on both sides; and, if the charge be proved, the superintendent preacher shall expel from the society the person so offending." Here is the stipulation of a general right, which every local officer amongst us may claim; but there is no exception, no reservation; no provision for extraordinary emergencies; no stipulation for the intervention of special district meetings; no power given them to take part with the minority against the majority, to declare the former the sound, and the latter the unsound part of the society; to submit new and arbitrary tests to these local meetings, and to enact, that "no leader, &c. shall be allowed to vote, in any trials, or to take part in the administration of our church government, so long as he refuses" these novel and illegal tests. Do you really think that the "GIANTS" of 1795 and 1797, as Mr. Vevers calls them, would have submitted to these things? The mighty had been fallen indeed, if these things could have been submitted to, even in the present day, without occasioning the most serious division that Methodism has ever known! The same thing will occur again, whenever these despotic claims are set up and acted upon. And this alone is a sufficient proof of the real character, both of the measures and of the party with whom they originated!

X. This subject you resume at p. 19 of your pamphlet, and in a style and manner still more unworthy and deceptive. Repeating our denial of the right of the Conference, or of a district meeting, "to try, suspend, or expel any local officer or member of society," you again affect doubt and uncertainty; and, with wonderful simplicity, inquire, "What do you mean by this?" This question you answer by another,—"Did you ever know your officers or members tried, suspended, or expelled by the Conference, by a district meeting, or even by a superintendent, since 1797, on his own authority?" Now, if you mean to limit this latter inquiry to the London South Circuit, we reply, that we look better after these things, and are in no humour to submit to any such arbitrary proceedings; but if the question be a general one (and certainly you wish it to produce in your favour a general effect), then the emphatic reply which you have yourself given, "You never did!" is utterly false. Such a case we gave you at p. 25 of our Address to the Conference, in which Mr. Grindrod, "on his own authority," and in defiance of the local meeting, suspended Mr. M. Johnson from his office of a local preacher for three months. This was not the only case we might have cited; but it was one with the particulars of which you were fully acquainted when you wrote this fallacious reply. It is, moreover, a case in defence of which you have not a word to urge, notwithstanding we had strongly pressed it against you! What follows this hazardous reply is something worse than childish! "You cannot, therefore, mean that the Conference has set up a claim to displace your ordinary tribunals in the ordinary course of things?" What is left us in the ordinary course of things, we shall see by and by, when we come to examine the principles you have laid down; but what sort of deception is this which lurks under the pronoun "*your*?" "*Your* ordinary tribunals?" The

case out of which this question arose, occurred at Leeds, a place which you name with trembling! Surely, you have not so far calculated on the simplicity, or rather the stupidity of your readers, as to imagine that they cannot distinguish between London and Leeds; or that they will be satisfied with your proof, that no injustice has been done at Leeds, because our ordinary tribunals in London have not been displaced! The ordinary tribunals at Leeds were displaced and broken up by the special district meeting, in the manner stated at p. 18 of our Address to the Conference; another heavy and grievous abuse of power by that meeting, respecting which you deem it prudent to be altogether silent! The Conference, acting under the influence of your party, has unhappily sanctioned this conduct, and thanked the perpetrators of it for their services! In so doing, the Conference has certainly set up a claim to displace *our* ordinary tribunals, and those of every other circuit! Under the same baneful and destructive influence, they resolved that these proceedings were *constitutional* in Methodism, under the regulations of 1797!—a resolution which has more deeply compromised the public character of the Conference, than any other ever passed by that assembly! Whether all this is to be the *ordinary* course of things or not, we cannot tell; not knowing how far the influence and ambition of your party may carry you; but certainly, at present, it does appear to us most *extraordinary*!

As is usual, however, with men once embarked in a desperate cause, you grow bolder as you proceed. “Nay, even in the extraordinary circumstances of the Leeds case, no man was tried by the district meeting, but by the meeting to which, as local preacher or leader, he belonged.” You know better! You know that those regular and lawful meetings had been broken up, and that new meetings had been formed of such members *only* as chose to take the test; and that this was the scheme and law of the special district meeting, enjoined and insisted upon in their printed resolutions! You know that this was done in order that the special district meeting might have no difficulty in effecting their will and pleasure in relation to every trial which took place! You know that nothing which could be fairly and honestly called a trial did, in fact, take place at Leeds. It was all mere mockery! The special district meeting assembled to put out whom they pleased, and to retain whom they pleased. This was the result, practically, as to the individuals expelled; and it was the thing premeditated and designed. All who resisted the will of certain preachers were to be sacrificed; and refusing to submit, they were so sacrificed! And then you come forward, in great *affection* and simplicity, to tell the world, “No man was tried by the special district meeting, but by the meeting to which he belonged!” We ask you, in return, and with much more reason, “What do you mean by this?” The special district meeting either claimed the right to try, or they did not. If they claimed the right, why did they adopt the (in that case) hypocritical farce of a packed and tested leaders’ meeting? If they made no pretension to this right, why did they assemble at Leeds? why regulate the proceedings of the local jurisdictions by their own dictatorial resolutions? and why pour in their own members into the leaders’ meeting, pending these trials, to overawe and control the decisions, to say nothing of the direct interference complained of? Your very great anxiety to persuade us that the district meeting did not try, should seem a sufficient admission

that they had no right to try. Will you hold to this? It is the admission of our whole case! We deny the right of a special district meeting to try local officers or members of society. Are we then agreed? If not, if you still claim the right, why then all this laboured attempt to show that the district meeting did not try and expel the brethren at Leeds? If they had the right, why be so anxious to prove that they did not exercise it? Would any man of common sense argue backwards and forwards in this extraordinary manner, if he had any other object than to blind people's eyes, and befool their understandings? That your book has no other object is evident, for in the very next sentence, coiling like an eel, you begin again to ply us with our denial of the right! And it is not until you have thrust this denial in quadruple form upon our simplicity, that we are favoured with a distinction between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* cases; a distinction nowhere recognised, either in the Plan of Pacification or in the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797!

"Seeing, then, all *ordinary* cases are out of the question, you must mean to deny that in no (any) *extraordinary* case of any kind, the Conference or a district meeting has any right or power 'to try, suspend, or exclude any local officer or member.' Let us, then, take such a case,—a case of immorality, a case of false doctrine, a case of notorious insubordination to the rules of the body." (Watson, p. 19.) Very well, and now that you have such a case, what follows? Oh, why, "it is clear," say you, "that if the local tribunals did their duty, the offender would be admonished or expelled in the ordinary way, and no interference of Conference or of a district meeting be required. This interference would not, therefore, take place." This is very kind, indeed, and we are happy to hear, that so long as we do our duty, we are not to be visited with this scourge! But do you not think, that it is somewhat impertinent to suppose that the local tribunals would not do their duty in such a case? Do you think it very likely, that respectable and religious men—men attached to Methodism all their lives, as most of our local officers have been,—would wish to associate and take part with heretical, immoral, or lawless individuals? This would certainly be a very extraordinary case; but did you ever know such a case? You deal largely in imaginary cases; but your argument stands very much in need of that kind of support which can be derived only from facts. You, nevertheless, most carefully avoid all appeals to facts! Can it be imagined, that if you had been in possession of a single instance, the circumstances and bearing of which, when examined, would have told in your favour, you would have withheld it? But we shall presently resume this subject. In the meantime, is it not a little too barefaced to propose to rob us of the liberties, so strenuously maintained by our fathers in 1795 and 1797, upon the bare supposition that it is possible that a whole leader's meeting, or the majority thereof, may at some future period renounce Mr. Wesley's doctrines, which they have embraced from heartfelt experience, and so long professed, and yet wish to go on hypocritically professing themselves Wesleyans? To the local preachers this argument can hardly apply; because, as you tell us, "the chapels are secured to those who love the doctrines which only can be preached in them." Are we to suppose, then, that these men would wish to go on preaching and teaching Mr. Wesley's doctrines, which they no longer believed? If you can suppose any individual so insane as to act thus, can you believe it of the majority of the leaders and



local preachers of a circuit? Again, is it not rather too much to put the whole Connexion under the surveillance of this new-fangled and tyrannical police, on the mere presumption that it is possible that the majority of the leaders and local preachers of a circuit will, all at once, and by compact and agreement, cast off all the restraints of character and decency, and become Sabbath-breakers, swearers, drunkards, liars, thieves, and immoral persons, or that they should wish to associate with and protect individuals of this description after proof and conviction! Lastly, after embracing Methodism ourselves, and training up our children within her pale, on the express terms of the treaties of 1795 and 1797; after investing, as many of us have done, our property in her chapels and institutions; after becoming, as many of us now are, responsible for an enormous amount of chapel debts (the bane of the Connexion, and the true foundation of your presumption); in short, after devoting all our energies, and many of us a long life, in incessant endeavours to support and extend a system, which (if it can be preserved against your underminings) we still believe to be better qualified than any other to spread the Redeemer's kingdom; are we now to be told, that all these treaties are to be given up—that it is expedient and necessary that all faith should be violated, and that we and our children should bow down our necks to this absolute government of the Conference, as exercised by special district meetings—the very thing which the men of 1795 and 1797 refused to acknowledge; and all, forsooth, because it is apprehended that it is possible that, at some future period, such a thing may happen as never yet did happen, to wit, that the great majority of a circuit may suddenly abandon all that is dear to them, and all at once break out into notorious insubordination to the rules of the body to which they are so strongly attached; and that, simultaneously, and without any assignable cause, they may wish suddenly to overturn that system, to which they have pledged themselves in heart, in hand, in property, in character, and in all that is dear to man? The government which can proceed to legislate on such principles as these ought to renounce its connexion, not only with the Christian church, but with the civilised world! We are persuaded this is not the character of the Methodist Conference. They will, ere long, we cannot but believe, see through your party; and will cast off an incubus, as disgraceful to themselves as it is detrimental and ruinous to the Connexion.

XI. In the preliminary part of your book, whilst paving your way to these monstrous absurdities, you inform us that we are not “sufficiently aware of the necessity of maintaining such a power of remedial interference!” Indeed, after carefully considering this question, and with all the aid of your sophistry (for it is not reason), we must still say, that so far from discovering any “necessity” for this power, we are the more convinced that it is the most dangerous and destructive power which, in a Connexion like ours, could be entrusted to your hands! The predilection of Methodism in favour of a system wholly itinerant has gone far to render you independent of the church. To talk of your responsibility to Conference, that is, to one another,—of the right of the people to appeal to the Conference, that is, to those who are responsible only to themselves, is gross deception! Does Methodism furnish her societies with any direct means of calling her Conference or a district meeting to account? Is there, in fact, any check on the Conference or on a district meeting, save that of public opinion; or any remedy, save that of disruption?



Had the Leeds brethren—so wrongfully expelled, and so shamefully treated, that a thousand members on the spot, and some of them the most enlightened and intelligent persons in the circuit, chose voluntarily to share their reproach and their wrongs, rather than submit to such treatment,—had these brethren, we ask, any remedy against either the district meeting or the Conference? And has this circuit, at this moment, any means whatever of protecting itself against similar treatment, save that which it has provided for itself by the resolutions of the 23rd September last?

We appeal, then, to all men of sense and experience, whether there can be either propriety or safety in granting you the powers which you have so unwarrantably assumed and so unrighteously exercised. Upon what principle, we ask, are the circuits and societies to be abandoned to the violence of a Conference faction, who would first impose organs and liturgies on them, not only against their consent, but in defiance of the most solemn laws and treaties; and then rend them in pieces for daring to complain? Has the church, has her local presbytery, no interest in the members of her community? Is Methodism the fruit of your labours exclusively or principally? Does God work by you alone in saving men? How many pious and faithful leaders and local preachers had spent their strength in gathering the souls thus cut off at Leeds! How incessantly and how painfully had they watched over them and preserved them for years! And do you now come forward, and demand of the church to surrender into your hands *exclusively* a weapon by which you may cut off her members by the thousand at a stroke, and that simply for non-submission to your high authority, in matters where neither faith nor morals are concerned? Do you make this imperious demand in the same breath with which you spurn all responsibility to the church; and preach up the Conference as the supreme and absolute authority? All this may appear very reasonable and “necessary” to you and to your party; but surely it is not the modest men,—not the men distinguished for meekness and humility, for faith and piety, in the Conference, who claim this irresponsible power over the church! These latter are not heard to talk, as you do, of “compelling obedience by the force of their authority,” and of their “power to rule the church for its edification!” It must be a very different, and we hope a very limited, class of men, who, overlooking the labours of local preachers and leaders, and of their more humble and heavenly-minded brethren in the Conference, can so far fancy themselves sole lords of the inheritance, as to prefer these demands in the face of the Connexion! Men whose souls are not fired with the same unworthy ambition to rule the church,—men whose ambition reaches higher, and aims at a recompense of reward for turning many to righteousness, cannot surely stand up for the necessity of thus converting the church into a Gentile lordship! You, of course, do not intend any wrong; you are no advocates for arbitrary dealings; you only want the power “for edification;” but you would be shocked at the bare thought of the possibility of your ever abusing it! And who, indeed, could suspect that so good and excellent a man as Mr. Evangelist would ever do any harm to his neighbour?

Your argument in support of the *necessity* of this pretended right of interference, like every other argument in your book, was not to be deduced from fact and experience. You are constrained to admit, in the outset, that “the Connexion, by the blessing of God, has been

for several years past in great peace ; the discipline of the body being carried generally into effect, by the united efforts of preachers and leaders. False doctrines have seldom sprung up ; immorality has not been winked at ; and the prevalent desire has been, not to innovate upon our discipline, but to maintain it." This you admit on behalf of the people, and we wish you could say as much on behalf of the Conference and of special district meetings ; but, at any rate, there is nothing in all this to show us the *necessity* of your breaking faith with the Constitution of 1797, by the introduction of your new remedial power ! " But," you ask, " will any thinking man assume, as the basis of an argument on a question of government, that this will always be the case ? There have been a sufficient number of cases to show how necessary and beneficial such a power of interposition is [why did you not produce ONE !] ; and had there been none at all, since ' it must needs be that offences will come,' are you acting considerably to advocate a principle that would shut out the right of such interference ?" It is difficult to avoid treating this question as it deserves. Individual cases, of course, are out of the question ; they can be dealt with in the ordinary way. The case is that of a whole circuit, or the majority of the leaders, local preachers, trustees, and stewards, becoming suddenly corrupt in doctrine, morals, or discipline ; and we are asked whether any thinking man will found an argument on a question of government, without assuming for its basis so great an absurdity ! But we wish to be serious, and therefore we proceed with the quotation : " Some of our societies, with their leaders and local preachers, have, in times past, been infected with Arianism, and Socinianism, and Universalism." Was this the case at Leeds ? " Others have been disposed to wink at certain forms of Sabbath-breaking, as smuggling, and other immoralities." Do you speak of Leeds ? " Others have been inducted into views of church government, opposed to the first principles of that under which we—live," &c. Still nothing about the necessity at Leeds ! So, then, there was no *necessity* for this kind of interference at Leeds, and all that was done there was unnecessary ! Is it not rather cruel thus to leave the Leeds Special District Meeting in the lurch ? Why do you stop short with your imaginary cases ? Why not include one, at least, so recently supported by fact ? Why did you not add, " Others have rebelled against the superintendent and the Conference, for overturning the lawful decisions of the leaders' meeting relative to organs, and for suspending their local officers in defiance of the local jurisdictions ; and have proved so factious as to allege, against these acts of the Conference and the superintendent, the principle of the Plan of Pacifications and the Concessions and Codes of Laws of 1797 !" This would have been a famous case whereon to found your alleged necessity of remedial interference. It is the greater pity that you should have overlooked it, because, as we apprehend, it is the only case on which you can hope to succeed with your argument.

Abandoning the Leeds case, however, you tell us that all the other cases which you state have happened ; we presume, therefore, that they are parallel cases, and were all settled by the interference of a special district meeting, as at Leeds. If not, how, then, does the necessity for such interference appear ? But when and where did all these special district meetings assemble ? It is singular that we should never have heard of them. It is passing strange that whole circuits should have cast off their allegiance to Methodism, and that the Con-

nexion should have remained in total ignorance of facts so alarming ! Perhaps you will have the goodness to favour us with a sight of the printed resolutions of these former district meetings, or inform us where they may be procured, that we may compare them with those of the Leeds Special District Meeting ! Perhaps, also, you would not think us troublesome if we request you to point us to the resolutions and thanks of the Conference respecting these former district meetings ; and especially as the omission of all these particulars in your books is rather a serious oversight.

Alas ! in all this laboured effort to find a ground for your pretended necessity, you have drawn too largely on our simplicity ! That the cases you suppose have occasionally happened in relation to individuals, we may safely admit ; but, that a whole circuit, or the majority of any circuit, ever did renounce or cast off Methodist doctrine or discipline, or become Sabbath-breakers, smugglers, or immoral persons, we deny. The very suggestion is preposterous ! Until, however, this is not only proved to have been actually the case, but also that its recurrence is probable and justly apprehended, your argument is not worthy a moment's consideration ! and yet, in order to prepare us for submission to this odious assumption of power, you require us to suppose all this to be the case in our own circuit ! "Suppose, that in your own respectable society the majority of local preachers and leaders were to imbibe and teach false doctrines ;—and if the primitive churches fell by this means, what security have you against this trial of your faith ?—how, then, would the doctrine of the inviolability of your local jurisdictions affect you ?" You have yourself answered this question so far as the alarm which you would excite extends, viz., with regard to the chapels. We perceive, in several places of your book, that dark and unfounded insinuations are thrown out in relation to the chapels, which cannot be mistaken. Blow the trumpet ; sound an alarm ; the danger is great ! It is not only the church and the faith, but the chapel, also, is in danger !!! Would any man descend to these subterfuges, if he did not feel convinced, in his conscience, that he had no foundation in truth and righteousness whereon to rest his argument ? But you have told us, the "chapels are secured to the use of those who love the doctrines which only can be preached in them." The poor souls, then, whom you would thus alarm by your chapel cry, may rest themselves quiet,—"the chapels are secured !" But pray, who built these chapels ? who settled them on the Conference ? who secured them to those who love the doctrines ? and who are they who are continually subscribing, and building, and settling chapels, in our circuit ? Is it not rather early to accuse them of aiming at the chapels, "as well knowing the bearing" of this point ? Had you not better wait until they have ceased building and settling chapels, before you raise the cry that they want to pull them down ?

To make the supposition you request us to make, would only become the sad tenants of St. Luke's ! and we introduced the quotation chiefly on account of the question it contains :—"If the primitive churches fell by this means [imbibing false doctrines], what security have you against the trial of your faith ?" We know not how far you may be acquainted with the history of the primitive churches ; but if you know anything of that history, then you know that by this inquiry you impose on the uninformed reader ! The primitive churches fell by the corruption of their bishops, both in

faith and practice; and not by any heresies originating with the laity. Trace all the great corruptions which have marred the church of Christ, and we will defy you to prove that any one of them ever obtained in the church, or became productive of general mischief, until embraced and defended by the regular clergy. We are bold to meet you here on the broad scale of history; and we affirm, that no church ever did, and no church ever will, fall away, under a sound, zealous, and faithful ministry! This is a position in which not only every intelligent Methodist, but every enlightened Christian, will fully concur with us. Before, therefore, we can suppose that the majority of our leaders and local preachers will become corrupt, we must make a previously necessary supposition, which you have not requested us to make! We must suppose, that the majority of the Methodist Conference have become corrupt and fallen! Until this latter supposition be realised, it is impossible that any rational man can entertain the former; and especially, seeing that all our pulpits are secured to your use. With what face, then, do you call upon us to suppose this general corruption of our local officers and members; and what shall you be doing, whilst this "leaven of heresy and sin" is working its way to such awful ascendancy? To what purpose have we called you from your trades, and endowed you with incomes, which place you in happy comparison with the clergy of all other churches, not excepting even those of the Establishment,—to what purpose, we ask, have God and Methodism freed you from secular cares, and set you as watchmen over the fold, if you thus propose to slumber until "immorality, false doctrine, and faction ride triumphant?" Why not stay the evil in its commencement? Why not, on the first discovery, apply the remedy, by bringing the delinquent before the proper local tribunal, whilst the members of those tribunals remain sound and pure? There must surely be ample opportunity for so doing. The plague itself does not carry off a nation in a day! whole churches do not fall from God and from righteousness, as the Son of the Morning fell from heaven! Large and combined societies of Christian men, united by the strongest ties,—men, whose union has been confirmed by habit, consolidated by the growth of years, and cemented by that charity which is the bond of perfectness, do not renounce their principles and their creed, cast off the restraints of religion and morality, and riot in licentiousness by an instantaneous impulse, resembling the sudden disruption of an earthquake! Effects like these are not the lamentable fruit of a day, a week, a month; whole years are generally consumed in these deplorable declines. It was not without reason, therefore, that the great Head of the Church first cast his eyes of flame on the angels (the bishops or pastors) of the Asiatic churches; and addressed to them his dread reproofs on the decay of those prostrate churches. We have no fears for Methodism, but through her Conference,—none, at present, for the Conference, but through your party! In saying this, we do but echo the voice and the sentiment of the venerable Wesley!

But "it must needs be that offences will come!" This is almost the only passage of Scripture which your book contains; for the Scriptures are not with you in this attack on the liberties of the church! The Scriptures are true,—*"It must needs be that offences will come;"* and, in the present instance, it is highly important to observe the door at which they enter. Special district meetings, you tell us, are not required in *ordinary* cases; it is only under *extraordinary* circum-

stances that they obtrude. You wish to prove a necessity for their interference in the latter cases ; for this purpose you beat about for a case,—a case in point,—an extraordinary case. “Let us,” say you, “take such a case.” But whither would you go in quest of such a case? The Leeds case was before you ; a case in which a special district meeting had actually been held ; a case in point, therefore ;—an *extraordinary* case ;—a case, moreover, so recent, so generally known, and the facts and circumstances of which have been so fully detailed ! How is it that this case will not serve your purpose? How is it that you feel yourself compelled, at every point, to fly off from all fact and experience, and to draw upon your imagination continually for fanciful cases, such as never did and never will occur? Can any one mistake you here? Is it not conclusive that the Leeds case does not admit of defence ; and that, conscious of this, you studiously keep it out of sight? The Leeds brethren, as is proved by their proposals to Mr. Grindrod, of the 13th October, 1827, had no quarrel with either the doctrine, the ordinary discipline, or the morality of Methodism. No! but they complained of the violation of established and fundamental laws, and of the overthrow of the decisions of their local meetings, by Methodist preachers, and by the Methodist Conference! Now, this is a case of sober fact. It is the only case with which your fertile imagination cannot sport ; and, after the explicit notice we have taken of your suppositious cases, we must beg leave to tell you, that it is the only case in which you can ever hope to establish a necessity for those outrages on the local jurisdictions of the circuits and societies, which you would pass off under the smooth title of “remedial interferences.” Such interferences, by special district meetings, are necessary, highly necessary, to support and extend what is called Conference power,—not indeed the proper and lawful power vested in the Conference by the constitution of Methodism, and which is not questioned ; but the usurped and oppressive power of which the Leeds case furnishes so instructive a display,—the power to declare an “emergency” whenever you please ; and then “to act and decide,” without law, and without responsibility (except to one another), as to you may seem right and necessary! Yes, such interferences are necessary, highly necessary, to consolidate and preserve that absolute domination which you and your party have ever been so anxious to establish ; and which you would then so proudly exercise in the name of the Methodist Conference! This is the necessity, and the only necessity for any interferences, by special district meetings, in local affairs of the people, except where travelling preachers are accused. The necessity, in this case, we fully and freely admit ; but then, you will pardon us if, in our great ignorance and simplicity, we cannot see any just reason why you, and some dozen or score of your brethren, should be allowed thus to vie with the lords of the Gentiles, in exercising this absolute dominion in the church ; nor why our societies should become the mere vassals of the despotic party in the Methodist Conference. The character of the power you claim is sufficiently displayed in its effects. It is not healing ; it is not conciliatory ; it is not Christian. Good men form their opinion of it from the Leeds case! There, Methodism has lost a thousand souls, whom Jesus Christ is unwilling to lose ; and with whom, therefore, his Spirit remains! With these brethren we have no controversy in relation to doctrine, or morals, or ordinary discipline! It is simply a question about this absolute power!—a

power to which Christian men cannot, will not, ought not, to submit. It is the power, not of love, not of the gospel, but, in its essential principle, of the sword; that is, not of reason and principle, but of lawless will and party violence. If we are thus in your power; if we are really thus enslaved in Methodism; if you feel yourselves secure and firmly seated in this car of victory, triumphing over the church, then go on and prosper! Estimate the character of a Methodist no longer by his relation to Christ, but by his subjection to you! "It must needs be that offences will come!" here is your authority and commission! never mind the woe which follows this declaration; your power is *necessary*; "*it must needs be!*" Men who climb to elevations, at which their heads grow dizzy, seldom pause to calculate on consequences!

XII. Having thus answered, we trust to your entire satisfaction, your fallacious reasonings on the pretended necessity of thus allowing special district meetings to interfere in the local affairs of circuits, except where the conduct or appointment of travelling preachers are concerned, we come now to consider how far we are affected, in the *ordinary* course of things, by this extraordinary power; and by the still more extraordinary reasoning on which you would establish it.

It is amongst the first and by no means the least of the attacks you have made on the foundations and guarantees of our *ordinary* rights, that the "great sacrifices in respect to authority," made by the Conference of 1797, "on the part of the superintendent and of the whole body of travelling preachers," should be frittered down into mere *checks*! They were checks indeed, and most efficient ones; but they were also actual grants of power, "sacrifices in respect to authority." The language of these checks is:—"Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands;" "the whole management of your temporal affairs;" "and by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority!" Here, the thing sacrificed and given up is "authority"—"the authority of the superintendent and of the whole body of travelling preachers;" and that, according to the Conference of 1797, to a very great extent. But here your conscience steps in to tell us, that "no absurdity can be greater" than to suppose that the Conference "divided the duties and powers of the ministry with the leaders' meeting!" All these great "sacrifices in respect to authority," consisted of nothing more than "certain checks upon the possible abuses of power!" (Watson, p. 9.) We have told you that we shall not contend with you about terms and phrases; but let any man, who takes to himself the credit of possessing common sense, turn to the printed circular, issued by the Conference of 1797, containing "the Concessions," and, confining his attention to the points in hand, let him say, whether the Conference did, or did not, make the leaders' meeting the sole judges of the *evidence* on which, in all disputed cases, the superintendent should admit or expel local officers and members of Society? and whether, by those Concessions, their decision be not *final* in all such cases?

In order to found your argument for thus reducing these Concessions, you have favoured us with a list of the duties and powers; or, as you fondly term them, "the inherent right of ministers and pastors." As we do not intend to quit the subject by launching into discussions on foreign matters, we must reserve any remarks we may have to make on this "bill of fare." We must remind you, however, that you have not drawn this list out of the Scriptures, as you would



persuade your reader ; but, as the country people say, " out of your own head ;" and that, like everything else in your book, it rests on no better foundation than your own broad assertion !

As ministers, however, are but men, and therefore liable to " errors and passions," you admit, that these powers may be "*checked* !"—a most wonderful admission, to be sure, to come after, and in explanation of, the very large and liberal " sacrifices of authority " made in 1797 ! But, lest these checks and these sacrifices should be of any benefit to the people, they must be counter-checked by two principles, which you (not the Conference of 1797) lay down :—" 1. That they imply no transfer of powers inherent in the ministry, to those who are not in that office. 2. That the checks shall not obstruct the legitimate and scriptural exercise of those powers." (Watson, p. 7.) How plausible ! who can object to principles so just and equitable ? Who is so insane as to imagine, that what is *inherent* in one, can be *transferred* to another ? Or who so wicked as to wish to obstruct the legitimate exercise of the Christian ministry ? But, anxious still to keep in view a practical question, and to see distinctly what are the counter-checks you wish to impose on the authority of the two principles thus laid down, and how much is still left us of the original checks or sacrifices of 1797, we have to turn from page to page of your book, and gather them up as we can ; for though you talk plausibly enough about general principles, you are rather cautious of bringing these counter-checks into very prominent view. Emanating from these principles, we find no less than three of these counter-checks—viz., the minister's conscience ; an appeal to Conference ; and a special district meeting !

1. The minister's conscience.—" It is clear," say you, " there may be cases of which the ultimate decision must rest with him." The cases you mention (and into which we enter not at present), relate to the admission and expulsion of members, in which the minister and his church are not agreed. " There is, in this case," you tell us, " a clear power of pastoral rule ; and this rule is manifestly established upon the duties made obligatory upon the minister by the very nature of his office itself." It is, therefore, a matter of conscience ; and " either he must compel obedience by the force of his authority ; or, if a man of conscience, must abandon so rebellious a flock."—Watson, p. 8. We, therefore, set this down as a separate and distinct power which you claim for Methodist preachers ; for, although you mention it in relation to a Dissenting minister, yet conscience must be equally binding in one church as in another. You, indeed, appear to substitute for it, in Methodism, an appeal to the Conference ; and lay it down as a great advantage which a body, existing, like ours, in the form of a Connexion, enjoys over Independent churches, that both preachers and people can appeal to the " common authority !" But it is here that we discover the fallacy of your argument, and the hollowness of this plea of conscience ! What appeal can there be in a matter of conscience, save to the Word of God, the sure word of testimony, and the only " common authority" in such matters ? Next to the authority of Christ, is the authority of the church. But your man of conscience cannot submit his conscience to the church, and yet you require him to submit to Conference ! Here, however, you stop short ; to make out the great advantage of this appeal of conscience to a common authority, you should have proved the infallibility of Conference, and thereby its capacity and right to decide men's consciences. In short,

if you really mean anything by that argument, you must mean, that whenever a superintendent, perceiving the decision of the leaders' meeting to be against him, shall think proper to stand up and exclaim, "My conscience, brethren, my conscience!" then, instantly, the jurisdiction is transferred from the leaders' meeting to the Conference; and there is an end at once, as to that case, of all the Concessions and the Code of Laws of 1797! Nothing more can be required to convert an *ordinary* case into an *extraordinary* one; and, as the minister may perform this farce whenever he pleases—as it is a matter solely within his own breast, we do indeed think this a total subversion of our ordinary tribunals, and a practical comment on your word "consult!" The leaders' meeting, if this point be conceded, is nothing more than an honorary council, whose advice the superintendent may take or reject, as he pleases. This, then, is the first of your counter-checks, and your first blow at the Concessions of 1797.

2. But if the superintendent should really be a man of conscience; and disposed, therefore, at any rate rather to submit his conscience to the lawful decision of the church, than of any Conference; or if he be a man of ordinary taste and sentiment, and, therefore, incapable of acting before a leaders' meeting, the first mentioned farce; then you can put him in the way to do the same thing, viz.—to overthrow the ordinary tribunal a little more decently! A man of this description will necessarily have about him a certain degree of prudence and foresight. Such a man, avoiding the question of conscience, has but to look around him for some simple and pious soul, who, believing all the minister tells him to be gospel (and such souls are to be found in every assembly of the church), shall be prepared to follow his instructions. These instructions are simply to wait until he finds that the vote of the meeting is contrary to the will of the superintendent; he is then to rise, and utter the potent words, "I appeal to the Conference!" These words, like a talisman, instantly transfer the jurisdiction; and the superintendent, "of his own authority," and in defiance of the local tribunal, immediately proceeds to admit or expel, as to him may seem meet! There is, indeed, the appeal to the Conference, if anybody shall think it worth while to be at the trouble and expense of prosecuting it; which is not very likely! "To the people," you observe, "as in 1797, are granted certain checks upon the possible abuses of power; against the possible abuse of which checks themselves, however, an APPEAL always lay to the Conference from *any* person whatever *thinking* himself aggrieved."—Watson, p. 9. It would be a hard matter if a superintendent could not find one person to serve his purpose in a leaders' meeting, though all the rest should be of one mind. But of this pretended appeal we shall treat hereafter; at present, we are merely enumerating your counter-checks, in order to see what is left us of our *ordinary* jurisdictions; and therefore we do but name,

3. That in case the annual assembly of the Conference be not near at hand, and the superintendent, finding that the leaders' meeting penetrate all these politic schemes, and are firm in resisting them, is of opinion that he cannot go on comfortably in his circuit, whilst thus at war with the local authorities, he may then "allege an emergency!" Presently, down comes the President of the Conference, with three official advisers (the heads of your party) and all the preachers of the surrounding district, and as many more as may be thought

necessary to give evidence on behalf of the Conference! This assembly immediately vote, that they have "full powers to act and decide as to them may seem right and necessary!" The only question then is,—“Is the power for which this superintendent has chosen to contend worth preserving? If it be, let us invent a new test; and immediately expel all who do not choose to submit, though it should be not less than a thousand of the best leaders, local preachers, trustees, stewards, and members of the society.”

Now, these are the counter-checks which we gather from your book; and we put it to every fair and candid man, whether, in all this, an attempt is not made to interfere with our *ordinary* tribunals? Whether, in short, if these counter-checks be admitted, the concessions and checks of 1797 be not worse than useless—a mere delusion! But this is not our argument; our great point, to which we adhere, is, that this is not the law of Methodism! None of these counter-checks appear in any record of Methodism; and were never heard or thought of, as we shall presently prove, until your party came into power, when these attacks on our liberties began first to steal out in the Magazine. Here we may safely rest our case. If for any one of these counter-checks you can find any authority in the Plan of Pacification, or in the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797, we will yield the present controversy! Nay, so far as we are concerned, we should be willing, in that case, to give up all the concessions and checks, and everything else that the Conference has granted, or pretended to grant, to the people; for it were better that you should wield an absolute and irresponsible power, under the risks and dangers which invariably accompany the exercise of such a power, than that you should act under the shelter of ostensible checks which are rendered purely fictitious by this triad of counter-checks. These treble-checked checks are indeed an admirable device to screen and cloak the encroachments of ministerial power on the liberties of the Church; but they certainly afford no security against such encroachments. The appeal to the Conference is the perfection of the scheme. Whenever was a corporation known to abandon claims and pretensions to power, so long as any individuals amongst them, of character and conscience, could be found to maintain them? It would be a strange thing in the earth, if, in such matters, the politic morality of a corporation should be found more straightened and fastidious than the conscience of an individual minister! Such is the happy fruit of allowing Methodist preachers to follow the example of the Roman Catholic and other clergy, in claiming to themselves, *exclusively*, and of “inherent right,” every power, privilege, and right which Jesus Christ has vested in his whole church! Thus, Father Lainez, General of the Jesuits, spake for two hours, in the Council of Trent, in a high and magisterial tone. “His argument was, that the right of jurisdiction over Christ’s kingdom here, had been given entirely to the Roman Pontiff, and not a single particle of it to any other in the church!”

XIII. Having made this parade of your inherent rights, and modestly admitted these checks, thrice checked, you proceed to illustrate your views by a reference to Independent churches; and, as the two succeeding paragraphs contain your general scheme of ministerial power, we shall devote some attention to them.

“Every minister, even of an Independent church, has a right to claim these principles, in his agreement to labour with any people.

He may be required to *take the opinion* of his Church as to the fitness of persons to be received into their communion, but he is the person admitting : he may be restrained from excluding until delinquency is proved *before* the church, but he is the person excluding—the consent of the people *may be taken* before the admission of any one into the ministry, but he and his brethren in the ministry are the parties ordaining.”—Watson, p. 9. Now, this is rather an ambiguous way of talking. When the minister is required “to *take the opinion* of his church,” is he to be bound by the opinion given? When restrained from excluding, until delinquency is proved “*before* the church,” is it meant that the church is it to be satisfied with the proof, and that their judgment is to decide the case? If so, all is well; we require nothing more. That the minister, in general, admits, expels, and ordains, ministerially and officially (but not of inherent right), we need not to be told; he is the officer of the church to perform these acts. But, being bound to take the opinion and judgment of the church, is he to be at liberty, on his own high and spiritual authority, to go and act directly in the teeth of their decision? This was the case at Leeds in reference particularly to Mr. Johnson’s case; and it is clear, from what follows, that it is this latter course you are anxious to recommend to Dissenting ministers.

The duty of receiving and expelling members you have inserted in your list of inherent rights; and the right being, as you tell us, *inherent*, cannot, or ought not to be, in any sense, dependent on the will of the church! Thus you add, “If his people so act with him as to restrain nothing but a mistaken or selfish use of his powers, well; but if he subject himself to such a control, as would make the power of fulfilling his duties [Why do you change the terms of the argument? Read, make his right of receiving and expelling members] dependent absolutely upon others [*i.e.*, the church], he would by that act so far divest himself of his office, as to share it with others [the church], whilst he himself remains under its full and sole responsibility to God.”

In all this you assume and assert much, but you prove nothing. With better reason, the Independent minister, on the contrary, assumes and admits that he has no right whatever to force his church into communion with persons whom they believe and declare to be immoral persons; nor to separate them from communion with those whom they believe to be living and worthy members of the body of Christ. This is the real question; where are the scripture proofs on which you found such an “inherent right” in a Christian minister? You do but blind the eyes of the reader by all this talk about a pastor sharing his office with others, whilst he remains under its full and sole responsibility to God. The duty of a minister is to enforce by his ministry (not the force of authority, in your sense), upon all awakened and serious persons, the duty of Christian communion; and upon the church the duty and obligation of receiving all such persons into their communion. So also with regard to the expulsion of immoral and irregular members: and he is, generally, the officer of the church, to perform *officially* these acts. But it is no part of his duty to fly in the face of his church in particular cases, on which the church has decided. He can be under no responsibility to God in such a case, provided he have done his duty in rightly informing and advising the church on the subject. The church has decided the matter, and it would argue a very high degree of presumption in him to set up his

judgment and conscience in opposition to those of the church. The Independent ministers have more sense, and a better acquaintance with their scriptural rights and duties. They know, that however high and solemn the sanctions under which they exercise their ministry, yet, after all, churches are voluntary associations. They know that as they have no power to "compel" men to believe the gospel, and unite in church fellowship, "by the force of their authority" (an expression which could not have fallen from a respectable Dissenting minister), so neither have they authority to "compel" or *force* the judgment of the church as to the worthiness or unworthiness of any individual, whom they as ministers might wish to admit or expel.\*

But you can instruct the Independent minister how he is to act in such a case,—“he is instantly to become the accuser of his flock, and to charge them with refusing to admit into their communion, persons brought to God under his ministry, without any reason but a factious opposition; with resisting the expulsion of persons notoriously wicked; and proved (before whom you do not say!) to be so on un-

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\* Notwithstanding our determination not to launch out on general questions of Church Government, our sole object being to maintain the Constitution of 1795 and 1797, we cannot withhold the following passages, as an antidote to your inherent rights. It admits of no exception; no reservation of extraordinary cases; none of which the ultimate decision must rest with the minister; none in which “there is a clear power of pastoral rule, made obligatory on the minister by the very nature of his office itself.” After referring to our Lord’s precept relating to the disputes of private Christians (Matt. xviii. 15), Dr. Campbell observes—“The practice of the apostolic age, which has the best title to the denomination of primitive, is the surest commentary on this precept of our Lord. Not only were such private offences then judged by the church, that is, the congregation, but also those scandals which affected the whole Christian fraternity. Accordingly, the judgment which Paul, by the Spirit of God, had formed concerning the incestuous person, he enjoins the Church, to whom his epistle is directed, that is (to use his own words for an explanation), ‘them who at Corinth are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,’ to pronounce and execute. And in his second epistle to the same church (chap. ii. 6) he says, in reference to the same delinquent, ‘Sufficient to such a man is the censure which was inflicted by many,’ *ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων*, by the community, and (ver. 10), ‘to whom ye forgive anything,’ addressing himself always to the congregation, ‘I forgive also.’ We admit with the learned Dodwell,\* that in the censure inflicted on the incestuous person, the Christians at Corinth were but the executors of the doom awarded by the Apostle. Nor does any one question the apostolical authority, in such matters, over both the flock and the pastors. But from the words last quoted, it is evident that he acknowledges, at the same time, the ordinary power, in regard to discipline, lodged in the congregation. And from the confidence he had in the discretion and integrity of the Corinthians, he promises his concurrence in what they shall judge proper to do. ‘To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also.’ Now, though in after times, the charge of this matter also came to be devolved; first, on the bishop and presbyters, and, afterwards, solely on the bishop; yet that the people, as well as the presbyters, as far down, at least, as to the middle of the third century, retained some share in the decision of questions wherein morals were immediately concerned, is manifest from Cyprian’s letters still extant. In his time, when congregations were become very numerous, the inquiry and deliberation were holden (perhaps then more commodiously) in the ecclesiastical college, called the presbytery; consisting of the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons. When this was over, the result of their inquiry and consultations was reported to the whole congregation belonging to that church, who were called together on purpose in order to obtain their approbation of what had been done, and their consent to the resolution that had been taken; for, without their consent, no judgment could regularly be put in execution.”—Lectures on Eccles. History, l. iii. p. 32.

\* De Jure Laicorum Sacerdotali, c. iii. sec. 10.



questionable evidence, from laxity of moral feeling, or from the same factious spirit." There are, however, several absurdities in this instruction, which an Independent minister would not be likely to overlook :—

1. He must bring this railing accusation against the whole church, or "the majority of its members," which would be to *unchurch* his church!

2. As we have reminded you that no church ever did, or ever will pass into such a state, or continue in it, under a sound, zealous, and faithful ministry; he ought in fairness to preface the charge by admitting himself to be a corrupt and fallen minister!

3. The church, having associated themselves voluntarily—that is, without any compulsion from man, but under a high sense of religious obligation; and that for the very purpose of themselves enjoying, and, by the enlargement of their community, of spreading the blessings of the gospel, he must suppose them, or the majority of them, so insane, as to defeat these great ends of their union and violate their consciences, "without any reason but a factious opposition" to what they hold most dear and sacred!

4. Evidence, of whatever kind, can only be estimated by the judgment. The minister must, therefore, presume that his judgment is to be preferred to that of the whole church. You talk about "unquestionable evidence;" but your own case supposes the evidence to be, *in fact*, questioned by the majority of the church. The minister, as you put the case, thinks the evidence *unquestionable*: that is merely his opinion. The church, on the contrary, thinks the proof, or the case made out by it, so very questionable, that they positively refuse to act upon it: that is the judgment of the church!

5. Lastly, The minister's plea for all this is to be his conscience, and he is to take it for granted that the members of the church, or the great majority of them, have no conscience at all. They are to communicate with persons whom they believe to be immoral or disorderly; or to sacrifice one another to these inherent rights of the minister, in cases and on evidence which they deem "questionable;" and are to be compelled so to do, "by the force of his authority!" but no account is to be made of their consciences in these matters! You admit, that the church may restrain a minister "in a mistaken or selfish use of his powers," and we apprehend that a minister could give no greater proof of "mistake or selfishness," or that he wished to use these powers for ends "not legitimate, for the gratification of private prejudice, interest, ambition, or other unworthy passions," than thus to plead his conscience in opposition to the solemn judgment and conscience of his church.

And now, having brought the Independent minister into this predicament with his flock, what is the next thing to be done? Why, "either he must compel obedience by the force of his authority; or, if a man of conscience [a great stickler for the inherent rights], he must abandon so rebellious a flock, and seek one of a more Christian [a more submissive and less conscientious] character." Alas! although all this talk about compelling obedience by the force of authority may pass with Independent ministers as an admirable illustration of your own spirit, they are well aware that such authority is neither derived from the Scriptures, nor could it be beneficially exercised in the Christian church! The plain English of it is, "Unless I can have my own will, and my own way, in spite of you all, I will either uproot you as



a church, or you shall uproot me as a minister." There have been instances in which ministers have been weak or wicked enough to press on such an extremity; but the judgment and conscience of the church is not to be the sport of such men.

The Dissenting ministers, in general a pious, intelligent, and learned race of men, must doubtless feel very much obliged to you for this exposition of their inherent rights and conscientious duties. But unfortunately for your reputation and success with them, they have not so learned Christ. They know that all the requisitions of the Gospel are addressed to the understandings and the consciences of men, and can only be enforced to any purpose by moral considerations. Any other authority, however necessary and indeed inherent in the church, would, if vested in them *exclusively* as ministers, be of no value in their estimation. They have been taught that, should they exchange the proper character of a Christian pastor for that lordly superiority which you would affect, they must expect nothing but ruin to their churches. "'Perfect love,' says the Apostle John, 'casteth out fear.' It is no less true in the converse, 'Perfect fear casteth out love.' The great engine of the magistrate is terror; of the pastor, love. The advancement of the one is the destruction of the other. 'To attempt to combine them in the same character, is to attempt to form a hideous monster at best!'" The late celebrated Robert Hall, of Leicester, and afterwards of Bristol, understood, we presume, his scriptural rights and conscientious duties quite as well as the Rev. Richard Watson. In 1825, Mr. Hall was attacked in the daily prints for publicly expelling a member of his charge. He rested his defence on the judgment of his church; and intimates plainly enough his opinion of the minister who should set up his own judgment in opposition to that of the church. His words are, "In that judgment I heartily concurred; but, *had it been otherwise*, I could not have declined the *duty assigned me*, without assuming more of the high priest than is consistent with my ideas of religious decorum." And this will apply to those superintendents in Methodism who refuse to put motions regularly moved and seconded at the quarterly meetings. They have no fear of seeing such motions negatived, and refuse to put them only when they perceive that they are likely to be carried. They, therefore, set up their judgment in opposition to that of the church! They assume the high priest at the expense of religious decorum!

The great *panacea* in Methodism for healing the consciences of both church and minister, when thus wounded by conflict, is an appeal to the Conference! and this you think an immense advantage which we enjoy over Independent churches. You play upon the imaginary difficulty of these churches, and ask, "Where can the better part of the members [*better*, that is, tame and submissive to the minister] find redress? If a minority, they would have none but a separation." In voluntary societies, where an obstinate minority persists in opposing the general judgment and will of the great majority, what other remedy ought they to have? "Whilst, in case of their being part of a Connexion, they equally with the minister would have their appeal to the *common authority*." That is, if they cannot (being a minority) outvote the majority, they may call in the district police to beat them down! Who does not see that the Connexion has nothing to do with all this? The Connexion is not called upon, the sense of the Connexion is in no way taken! It is a mere device to

give the minister and his party (the minority, however small) a victory over the church! "In Methodism," you tell us, "every minister, when factiously opposed [when he cannot have his own way, and chooses to call the church factious], instead of being placed in the alternative of *offending his conscience* or of quitting his charge, has the power of resorting to authorities, acknowledged both by the people and by himself, for a redress of the grievance." To be sure he has, viz., to the leaders' meeting. But by these "common authorities" you mean special district meetings and Conferences! Now we deny, that since 1797, at any rate, either district meetings or Conference are, or have been, the common authorities in such cases, viz., in the admission and expulsion of members, and the trial of local officers. This was a main question discussed and settled in 1797. By the Concessions and Code of Laws of that year, these matters can now be transacted only "in conjunction with the leaders' meeting." But were it otherwise, the enlightened and intelligent Dissenting minister will discover nothing here that could improve his situation, save what his conscience would revolt at. He would perceive in your reasonings on this, as on every other subject in dispute, the same want of clear and distinct ideas, the same illogical reasoning, and the same absence of enlarged and comprehensive knowledge of the subject, of which we have already complained.

1. He would understand perfectly well how, in a matter of conscience, a difference between parties might be composed by the communication of light and conviction to the minds of the disputants; but he would not so clearly perceive how a case of conscience could be settled by an appeal to any authority save the Word of God. Perhaps you think the authority of Conference not much short of this standard?

2. He might be willing to ask advice, and thankful to receive information, but he would have very great difficulty in submitting his own *conscience* to any *human* authority: and, if the submission must be made, he would doubtless question within himself, whether he might not as well submit to the church of God, as to a conclave of brother ministers; who, having the same bias as himself, might possibly only confirm him in error! He would know from the history of former synods and conclaves, that this was no new thing in the church.

3. This difficulty of submitting his own conscience to a common authority, would teach him to apprehend some difficulty on the part of the church. Instead, therefore, of applying your "infallible remedy," he would be apt to judge of it by the Leeds case; in which this appeal to a special district meeting cost the society upwards of 1,000 souls! He might find little relief to his conscience in this sad alternative; and think it of little consequence, whether he were compelled "to quit his charge," or his charge compelled "to quit him!" And, inasmuch as a refusal to submit, in a matter of conscience, to a common authority, is no great offence in the estimation of a Dissenting minister, he would probably suspect that the men, who thus saved their consciences, were "the better part of the members."

4. In short, every man of common sense and experience must perceive, that, however valuable the advice and counsel of other esteemed and prudent ministers may be in healing a private quarrel, or reconciling a personal difference between a minister and any of his flock; yet, in questions of authority and right, between the ministry on the one hand, and the church or laity on the other; and which are

made, as you make them, matters of conscience, it is folly to talk of a *common* authority. If consciences can be reconciled by authority, why is the Christian church divided into so many sects and parties? Your "great advantage" of an appeal to a common authority, the creature of your own imagination, resolves itself into a mere aggravation of the disorder. It enlarges and hastens the separation you propose to prevent! But to talk of a common authority in such cases, composed, like the Methodist Conference, wholly of ministers, and in which the consciences of the members have no representative, is something worse than folly! It is here that the Dissenting minister will perceive the true object for which you contend. He will perceive, that the preservation of doctrine, morals, and *ordinary* discipline, is altogether out of the question, as in the Leeds case. But that, if every question affecting the rights and consciences of the church can be brought for ultimate decision before a conclave of ministers (which was the great engine of papal policy), then those ministers may establish any despotism they please in the Christian church! They not only *may* do this, but all experience goes to prove that they assuredly *will* do it! It is here that the conscience of the Dissenting minister would be a bar to his embracing your theory. Its only utility is to establish a power in the ministry, which he knows to be neither scriptural nor lawful; and which, therefore, he would not dare to claim.

XIV. This illustration of your principles from the case of Independent churches, is followed by an attempt to apply them more directly to the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism. Here we travel over the same ground, the instances of check and counter-check being the same, and applied to the same cases, the admission and expulsion of members and local officers.

But it is of importance here to ascertain, in the outset, whether Methodism do really acknowledge this right of admitting and expelling the members of her societies to be *inherent* in her ministers; or whether she regard it as not *inherent*, but *derived*; and, if derived, from whom? They who set up claims to *inherent* rights should establish them by proof. This was your business; but, not being an easy task, you are content to insert this right in your list, and to take it for granted! We deny the right; but it certainly is not our business to prove a negative. Yet, in following a writer who asserts everything, and proves nothing, we must either leave the reader in the dark, or travel much beyond the line of our necessary duty. We shall trouble ourselves no further, however, on this subject, the question being now purely Methodistical, than to refer to Mr. Wesley's opinion on this right. That opinion, with us, is decisive; we think it will be so with every unprejudiced reader.

Amongst the numerous opponents of Mr. Wesley, he acknowledged that the Rev. Mr. Church had treated him more as a gentleman, a scholar, and a Christian, than any other. But Mr. Church pressed upon a tender point, on which Mr. Wesley, as an avowed clergyman of the Church of England, found it rather difficult to give a satisfactory reply. The point was, Mr. Wesley's right, as a clergyman, to form "a separate ecclesiastical society or communion, over which he had appointed himself a governor, and taken upon himself all the spiritual authority which the very highest church governor could claim." With the question between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Church we have nothing to do; but we cite the following passage to show,

that even Mr. Wesley's power to admit and expel members was not inherent, but derived from the society itself. And we follow his method, printing Mr. Church's argument in *italics*, and Mr. Wesley's replies in the ordinary type.

"How then will you vindicate all these powers! All these are, declaring those are no longer of our society. *Here is a manifest congregation. Either it belonged to the Church of England, or not. If it did not, you set up a separate communion against her; and how then are you injured, in being thought to have withdrawn from her?* I have nothing to do with this: the antecedent is false, therefore the consequence falls, of course. *If it did belong to the church, show where the Church gave you such authority of controlling and regulating it?* Authority of putting disorderly members out of that society! The society itself gave me that authority! *Are not these powers INHERENT in her governors, and committed to the higher order of her clergy?* No; not the power of excluding members from a private society," &c.—Wesley's Works, vol. xvi. p. 166. Ed. Bristol, 1772.

Thus, Mr. Wesley's notions were not quite so high as yours are! He had too much learning and good taste to plead the *jus divinum*, the *inherent* right! He admits his power to be derived from the society:—"The society itself gave me that authority!" We will add one quotation more from the preceding page. "*And took upon you all the spiritual authority which the very highest church governor could claim.* What! at Kingswood? In February, 1740-1? Not so. I took upon me no other authority (then and there, at least) than any steward of a society exerts, by the consent of the other members. I did neither more nor less than declare, that they who had broken our rules were no longer of our society."—Ibid. p. 155. Thus, then, according to Mr. Wesley, the right to expel from the Methodist society is, 1. Derived from the society. 2. It is to be exercised *with the consent* of the society. And, 3. It may, with such consent, be exercised by "any steward." So much for your boasted *inherent* rights, considered as a Methodistical question!

But the power which the Connexion in general entrusted to Mr. Wesley, they did not think proper, after his decease, to entrust to the Methodist Conference, without exacting from them, by stipulation and treaty, what they were confident Mr. Wesley would voluntarily do. Mr. Wesley was not merely expected to "consult," which is your favourite word, but in the exercise of this power he acted with the understood consent of the society. The Conference, however, is not merely *expected*, but is bound, by the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797, to act "in conjunction with the leaders' meeting."

"The leading guards against undue exercise of power as to the people, are, that when the leaders' meeting declare a person unfit to be admitted into society, no preacher shall receive him as a member; and that the delinquency of a member must be proved in the presence of a leaders' meeting, before he can be expelled. These instances are sufficient for my argument; and I need not, therefore, go into the case of local preachers, trustees, leaders, or into financial regulations."—Watson, p. 9. Now here again we have only to remark, that, understanding these "guards," thus quoted from the Concessions of 1797, as every honest man must and will understand them, we are quite satisfied. Notwithstanding all your misrepresentation and abuse, we desire NOTHING NEW in Methodism. This is the law! every true and sincere friend of Methodism will wish to maintain it. We, ourselves,

content and wish for nothing more. But the Leeds case! Have you forgotten that case? This law was not acted upon at Leeds. A new and dishonest interpretation prevailed there. It was contended, that the rule merely required the delinquency to be proved "AT," or as you have it, "before," a leaders' meeting. But that it did not say, "to the satisfaction of" a leaders' meeting! Having acted upon this contemptible quibble, and made it serve your purpose, you afterwards became ashamed of it; and have since given it up in terms, though not in substance. In so many words, therefore, it is not to be found in your book. We were shocked indeed, and every honourable mind must be shocked, to find that Methodist preachers had proceeded to set aside rules so equitable, on pretensions so discreditable! But, although you surrender the shadow, you still grasp the substance. You give up the dishonest interpretation, and yet all your reasoning travels along with it, and is designed to answer the same end. It is for this purpose that you are so partial to the word "*consult*." The superintendent, you admit, "may and ought to consult the leaders' meeting;" but "it is clear there may be cases of which the ultimate decision must rest with him," or, which is the same thing, with a special district meeting and the Conference! Will the respectable men in Methodism consent to be thus mocked and cajoled under the pretence of being consulted on matters which the superintendent has previously settled in his own study? It is for this purpose that, having stated the above simple rules, which no man can misunderstand or misinterpret, but through wilful blindness, you immediately follow them up with this artful inquiry, "The question then before us is, whether the Conference in 1797, or at any other time, conceded more than a power to guard the exercise of the rights of the ministry [read, the right of admitting and expelling members] against abuse; or whether it divided the duties and powers of the ministry [read, the right of admitting and expelling members] with the leaders' meeting?" Your motive for putting this question is explained by what follows:—"If the latter, then has a leaders' meeting, *in all cases*, no matter how unfounded, the power to forbid us to receive members into the church, to restrain us from expelling immoral members, &c., and that simply by withholding its concurrence."—Watson, p. 10. Now what, we ask, is the object of this inquiry, but precisely that of the disgraceful quibble on the word "*at*," to which we have alluded. What possible motive can you have for putting such a question, but to get rid of the Concessions of 1797, and to recover to yourselves, in all cases which you choose to call or to make *extraordinary*, the power of admitting and expelling members and local officers, independently of the local meetings?

We have already had occasion to remark on your manner of putting your cases, so as to take for granted what no man in his senses can grant you, and what you never can establish in proof or argument! Thus you say, "*in all cases, no matter how unfounded*." But leaders' meetings are not destitute of reason or principle. It is then impertinence in any man to assume what is so contrary to fact; or rather, it is a proof to what an extremity you are driven to find even a plausible pretext for the power you claim. The local meetings, and especially when they have men of your party to deal with, have generally a pretty good reason to assign for their proceedings. Thus, at Leeds (if it were possible for a moment to draw your attention to that case), the local meeting had a very good foundation for refusing



to concur in Mr. Johnson's suspension. You had previously overturned all law in relation to the subject in dispute, and had left the local authorities no remedy but to meet and express their sense of your conduct. They, therefore, desired their Secretary, Mr Johnson, to call a meeting for that purpose. Was there no foundation for refusing to suspend Mr. Johnson, for calling a meeting which they had requested him to call? The meeting was an irregular one! But who had rendered an irregular meeting necessary or desirable to the local authorities at Leeds? How ridiculous to talk of "all cases, no matter how unfounded." If you will deluge the church with these bitter waters, you must expect that they will flow in one channel or another, regular or irregular; and is it not just that, notwithstanding the vote of thanks, they should still recoil on your own party?

But to return to your question:—what the Conference granted in 1797 is plain enough. They conceded an efficient check upon the power which the society had intrusted to the preachers, of admitting and expelling members. The check consisted not in any division of your *ministerial* duties and powers; it had nothing to do with such duties and powers; but it authorised the leaders' meeting, *in all cases*, to judge and decide on the *evidence* on which you propose to exercise the power of admission and expulsion thus entrusted to you. It requires you, before you put this latter power in execution, in any disputed case, to submit the *evidence* to the local meeting, as to a jury; and to take its judgment thereon, and by which judgment you are bound.\* That this was the check, and to the full extent that we have stated, is manifest from all the clauses of the Concessions of 1797, relating to the subject. The quibble on the monosyllable "at," of which you are now ashamed, could apply to one phrase only, relating to the *expulsion* of a private member. As to the *admission* of members, it is completely shut out; the language of the Concessions being, "when the leaders' meeting declare a person unfit to be admitted into society, no preacher shall receive him as a member." If this does not apply to "all cases, no matter how unfounded," then where are the exceptions? There are certainly none in the Concessions or Code of Laws of 1797. But, as to the appointment and removal of local officers, the language of the Concessions is, if possible, still more express. "No person shall be appointed a leader or steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the leaders' meeting; the nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the leaders' meeting." Is this language sufficiently express and clear? Does it include "all cases, no matter how unfounded?" Is there any exception, reservation, or restriction, in

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\* Advantage has been taken of this passage to represent the leaders' meeting as a mere jury, and to claim for the superintendent exclusively the rights of a judge in civil courts. He is to lay down the laws and to fix the penalty. Nothing can be more fallacious or more opposed to the whole argument of Sect. XIII. and XIV. Of course, the evidence must be laid before a leaders' meeting as before a jury; and the witnesses or other evidence be produced. But the powers of the meeting do not end here. They try as a court of peers; their jurisdiction travels along with the whole case, and they must be consenting parties to the sentence awarded. The Code of Laws of 1797 declares the *consent* of the leaders' meeting to be essential to the ACT of admission or removal in the manner immediately following. This participation in the sentence is not the province of a jury, but proceeds on the principle of equality, that every man shall be tried by his peers or equals; or, rather, it recognises the right *indefeasible* of every church to try its own members.



favour of your novel claims? You know that throughout these Concessions there is none! But you cannot brook these checks on your high and imaginary powers! You wish to get rid of them! To avow this in plain English would be too barefaced; and, therefore, you make a stalking-horse of your consciences, and seek to conjure up a class of *extraordinary* cases! You talk of your responsibility to God, where no responsibility attaches; and startle at the thought of being rendered, in any case, "dependent upon co-ordinate authorities!" It is really amusing, in a Connexion like ours, to see a portion of Mr. Wesley's lay preachers (he would never allow you any loftier claim or title), who happen to have been called out to more extensive labour as Itinerants, at the expense of their brethren, affecting so much conscientious alarm and terror at the bare thought of being identified with these same brethren; or of having their high and spiritual powers put in commission, *even in a matter of evidence*, with men who exercise the same ministry and care of souls, in the same Connexion, and with at least equal zeal, fidelity, and success! "No absurdity," you tell us, "can be greater than that which this strange and novel view attributes to the Conference of 1797; viz., that it should make co-pastors of men who are not pastors; co-ministers of our excellent friends the leaders, who never professed to be ministers." Here the local preachers, some of whom rival you in talents and learning, and are, therefore, objects of jealousy, are tossed off as "men who are not pastors!" but the leaders, who do not profess to preach, and are, therefore, regarded with less distrust, are courted as "our excellent friends, the leaders!" But no matter; just reverse the order of the two classes in this wonderful sentence, and tell us whether the local preachers are *ministers*; and whether the leaders are *pastors*, in the Methodist Connexion? Could any absurdity then be greater, than to suppose that the Conference of 1797 should make co-ministers of men who really are co-ministers; and co-pastors of men who really are co-pastors in the same Connexion?—that, in judging of the *evidence* on which members may be admitted or expelled, the Conference should treat as "co-ordinate authorities" men whose labours are not less owned of God than your labours; and to whom Methodism is not less indebted than to you, for her increase, her strength, and her prosperity? Is it not this which shocks your pride and alarms your consciences?\*

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\* Mr. Beechman's Essay did not fall under our notice until after the greater part of this Reply was in type. We, therefore, have found great difficulty in making room for a condensed note on one or two points. We perceive that he has drawn together whatever he could in support of the favourite system, but we have not thought it of sufficient importance to induce us to print an additional sheet. In substance this Reply is a sufficient answer to all he has said against our views of this controversy. We observe, that, as one prop of Conference power, he claims the pastoral office *exclusively* for travelling preachers; and denies any share of it to local preachers and leaders! To make this out, he sets down the local preachers and leaders as *deacons* only; and shows, from Scott on 1 Tim. iii. 13, that "the deacons were principally appointed to dispense the charity of the church, and to manage its temporal concerns; yet they preached occasionally, or taught in private, or were readers in the public assemblies." All this we admit as to deacons; but, however much it may apply to our stewards, it applies not at all to local preachers and leaders; who are not appointed *principally*, nor at all, to manage the temporal concerns of the church, having merely a voice like the travelling preachers in the local meetings. Their offices are purely spiritual. That of the leader is essentially pastoral; and Mr. B. admits (p. 105) that "the *teaching* of the local preacher is of the higher kind of teaching" (that is *preaching*, which is

XV. The new doctrine of an appeal to the Conference "from any person whatever thinking himself aggrieved" (Watson, p. 9), is the twin doctrine with that of the pretended right of special district

the highest gift and endowment in the church). Nor will Mr. B. gain anything by his laboured exposition, from a certain class of critics, of various passages of Scripture which are thought to bear on this question. These passages have been so frequently and variously expounded on all sides, by men of equal learning and talents, that each party, whether Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Independent, retains his own interpretation, and rejects those of his opponents. Into this question, of course, we cannot enter. It belongs not to our question of Methodistical law; but, as Dr. Campbell remarks, "the practice of the primitive Church is the best commentary." What that practice was, and that it was directly opposed to Mr. B.'s whole scheme of Church government, the learned Doctor has abundantly shown in his lectures on Ecclesiastical History; a work which should be studied by every friend of religious liberty, and from which, at p. 77, we have given an extract.

We admit, however, the right of the inspired apostles, to rule with the very highest authority both the pastors and the people; yet the Church was to try even the apostles, Rev. ii. 2. And, saving always the right of private judgment and conscience, which forbids us to allow any man to have dominion over our faith, and the right of the Church, which is not to be "lorded over," even by inspired men; we admit the right of *ordinary* pastors to rule in (not over) the church, for edification; but so as it be not "as lords over God's heritage; but being ensamples to the flock."—1 Peter v. 3. And if we should admit a great deal more; nay, all for which Mr. B. contends, as to this power of rule and authority in pastors, what does he gain by it? We contend for the Methodistical rights of the local Presbyteries; and we maintain, that the local preachers and leaders have all the qualifications which St. Paul lays down as requisite for a bishop or presbyter, 1 Tim. iii. 2-7; Titus i. 6-9. They are all examined as to their knowledge of our doctrines, and selected for their moral and religious qualifications. The local preachers are strictly examined also as to their call to preach. They are all nominated, and, with the consent of the local meetings, appointed to office by the superintendents of circuits. After all this, it is not competent to Mr. B. to contend, that they are not *διδασκτικοί*, *apt to teach*. They are, therefore, not deacons, but elders of the church. Now, it will not be denied, that to the *πρεσβυτεροί*, the presbyters or elders, whom Titus was required to ordain in every city, were committed every right, power, and privilege, which belong to *ordinary* or *uninspired* ministers. Whatever rights, therefore, Mr. B. can establish as *inherent* in the Christian ministry, we claim, with equal confidence, as belonging to our local preachers and leaders; and as capable of being duly exercised and enforced in our local presbyteries. We may be amused with Mr. B.'s lofty notions of ministerial power, as applied to travelling preachers exclusively; but it is for him to prove, that men called and qualified to preach the gospel, and admitted in Methodism to exercise "the higher order of teaching;"—that men to whom Methodism commits, also, the especial and peculiar care of souls, in weekly classes, are not ministers and pastors; and, as such, entitled to share in all these high prerogatives.

This task Mr. B. has boldly undertaken, undismayed, and but little instructed, by the eminent failure of a co-ordinate of very superior powers, in the like attempt. He discovers, or he imagines that he discovers, from the Scripture, that a man cannot be a pastor, unless—1. He is called to rule or govern, as well as teach; and, 2. Be exclusively given up to the work of the ministry. We will take Mr. B. on his own ground, right or wrong; and, first, The call of the local preachers and leaders to teach and preach being admitted, we maintain that, Methodistically, they are called to rule also. Does not the leader rule in his class? Is he not a leader, if Mr. B. will have it so, in the one point *only* of Christian experience? But who can lead a class without perpetually dwelling on all the essential points of faith and practice, or what experience can there be where these essentials are omitted? Again, the Conference of 1797 say, "Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands." Are not the men thus invested with the executive government rulers in the church? And, if possessing the highest gift and endowment of the Spirit, the gift of prophesying or preaching, they are not acknowledged as entitled to rule;—if the prerogatives and powers invariably exercised by leaders' meetings and local preachers' meetings, and confirmed to

meetings to interfere in *local* affairs of the people. As Methodistical questions, nearly the same arguments will apply to each, and they must stand or fall together. For this reason we did not think it

them in 1767, be not powers of rule and authority, who is it that denies them this pastoral right? Is it not denied by the travelling preachers? and is not the motive sufficiently obvious, viz., that they may keep all the rule to themselves? But, *secondly*, the local preachers and leaders follow trades; and on this ground their rights as ministers and pastors are denied! Mr. B., aware that the apostles also wrought at their trades occasionally, makes a salvo here in their favour. With them, it was a case of necessity, arising out of the poverty or neglect of the churches; and, therefore, in submitting to labour, they lost none of their inherent rights. Now, we admit all that Mr. B. can say about the right of ministers to live by the gospel; but St. Paul refused to avail himself of the liberality of the Corinthians when offered. The reason he assigns was, not Mr. B.'s *necessity*, but because no man should make his glorying void. Here, then, is a second reason for not being chargeable to the churches. A third reason, he assigns in another epistle, for refusing to "eat any man's bread for nought," viz., "not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us."—2 Thess. iii. 9.

But, waiving the case of the apostles, so decidedly in our favour, can Mr. B. persuade himself or others, that the presbyters or elders, ordained in every city, in times when the apostles themselves were obliged to labour for their bread, were all maintained by the churches? To these men, we have observed, was committed all the power which can belong to ministers and pastors. In those primitive days, when the gifts and graces of the Spirit were so abundantly poured out, a multitude of men were raised up for the edification of the church and the spread of the Gospel, but the infant churches could not maintain them. They, therefore, continued to labour at their trades; and, with all their inherent rights as ministers and pastors, were nothing more than local preachers and leaders. Even the celebrated Origen, in the third century, maintained himself, his mother, and his brethren, by teaching grammar. And when, confirmed as professor of sacred learning at Alexandria, he sold his books of profane learning, and devoted himself exclusively to Divinity, he contented himself with the small pittance of four *oboli* per diem, allowed him by the person who bought his books. In short, although esteemed above all his contemporaries for learning and piety, "he lived and died poor, and destitute even of common conveniences."—JORTIN.

As the churches became settled, and increased in numbers and wealth, they gradually made a settled provision for one or more of these ministers; and who, from being thus exclusively given up to the ministry, obtained afterwards the title of bishop, to distinguish him from his brother presbyters; a distinction unknown in the New Testament, where the terms bishop and presbyter are used synonymously. But this bishop, when thus maintained and distinguished, obtained no authority over his brethren, except as chairman or president in their assemblies. Still, as Jerome remarks, "*communi presbyterorum concilio ecclesiæ gubernabantur*,"—"the churches were governed by the common council of the presbyters."—Hieron. in 1 Tit. Now the case was precisely the same with Methodism, which was a revival of religion, in many respects resembling the Pentecostal age. It pleased God to pour out his Spirit abundantly, and a multitude of men were "moved by the Holy Ghost," not to take upon themselves the management of the temporal affairs of the church, as deacons, but to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and God wrought mightily by these men, so that their call should not be questioned. But Methodism could not maintain more than a small proportion of these men; she therefore called out as itinerants (not as pastors) as many as she could support. The rest, like the ancient presbyters of the primitive church, continued to support themselves, and to exercise their spiritual gifts and *Divine* calling in a local sphere. They have the same *right* to be maintained by the church as the others; but the church cannot supply the means. They not only, therefore, glory, like St. Paul, in being chargeable to no man, but they contribute liberally to support those who have been called out. Are they to be stopped of this boasting? Are the necessities of the church to be made the plea for denying them the rights of the ancient presbyters; and are the men whom they thus contribute to support, to be the first to turn round upon them, and tell them they are not ministers and pastors? Can Methodism dispense with her local preachers and leaders? In every

necessary to enter on that subject in our Address to the last Conference. We shall now, however, beg leave to offer a few general remarks on this newly attempted appellant jurisdiction of the Methodist Conference.

circuit she has three or four times as many societies and congregations as she has travelling preachers. By whom are all these congregations and societies supplied with ministerial and pastoral service? The immense majority of our Sabbath congregations, with very few and occasional exceptions, are supplied with none but local preachers; and the people well know that the pastoral charge devolves almost entirely on the leaders. Are these ministrations efficient? Are they owned of God? Why then deny that those who thus efficiently serve the church are ministers and pastors? Why make the *necessities* of the church the plea for denying the rights and calling of her efficient ministers and pastors? If Methodism be thus effectually served by her local preachers and leaders; if she cannot do without them, and yet cannot maintain them; why are they to be thus insulted and degraded from that sphere and order in which they were called of God?

These high pretensions and supercilious claims have been in general confined to richly endowed establishments and to orders of highly benefited clergy. They are the natural *exanthemata* of those who unsparingly consume the fat, and array themselves in the fleece of the fold. That they should now be gravely preferred by Methodist preachers, and enforced by the Conference, proves not only that Methodism is advanced in her temporalities, but also that in equal degree she is diverging from primitive simplicity and purity.—“The apostles of Christ,” remarks the venerable Fletcher, “thought it no disgrace to follow some useful occupation, for the relief of their temporal necessities—when, instead of eating the bread of idleness, they cast their nets, alternately, for fishes and for men—they quitted the tabernacles in which they were wont to labour, for the sacred recreation of setting before sinners a *building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. This ardent charity, like St. Paul’s, is one of those mysterious things which are perfectly incomprehensible to the natural man, and which appear to him as the extremest folly.”\* “The morality of the Gospel,” observes Dr. Chalmers, “is not more strenuous on the side of the duty of giving this world’s goods when it is needed, than it is against the desire of receiving when it is not needed. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and therefore less blessed to receive than to give. For the enforcement of this principle among the poorer brethren, did Paul give up a vast portion of his apostolical time and labour; and that he might be an ensample to the flock, of working with his own hands, rather than to be burdensome, did he set himself down to the occupation of a tent-maker. But there is no more striking indication of the whole spirit and character of the Gospel in this matter, than the example of him who is the Author of it—and of whom we read these affecting words, that ‘he came into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister.’ It is a righteous thing in him who has of this world’s goods, to minister to the necessities of others; but it is a still higher attainment of righteousness in him, who has nothing but the daily earnings of his daily work to depend upon, so to manage and to strive, that he shall not need to be ministered unto.”

We have been roused to say these things in self-defence; at the same time, we are no advocates for confusion and disorder in the church of God. Mr. B. mistakes his ground when he appeals to Scripture, in order to found a distinction as to *order* between travelling and local preachers. All ministers of religion, called and admitted to teach and preach, are of the same order, and have the same *inherent* rights. But we admit the right of the church to appoint men to office and station. The distinction then lies, not in order, nor in any difference as to inherent rights, but in the conventional rights and powers of office. The respective offices of travelling preacher, local preacher, and leader, are distinct, and their rights and duties are distinct. But these offices belong to the peculiar economy of Methodism, and are not common to other churches. In the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, there are important variations as to these offices. There the local preacher administers all the ordinances of the church the same as the travelling preacher; and the itinerancy was confined there to single men. When a man married, he became a local preacher again. On this footing, all the moderate and most able advocates of Episcopacy have rested its defence. The church, they

\* Portrait of St. Paul.

1. We have already observed, that the doctrine of appeals from the judgment of the churches to that of a conclave of ministers or ecclesiastical dignitaries, claiming universal ascendancy in all spiritual matters, was the grand engine of papal policy, and one of the most powerful means by which the Roman See established its supremacy. It was wholly unknown in the first and best period of the primitive church (the canonists divided the primitive church into two periods, which they denominated *prima primitiva* and *secunda primitiva*), and was not introduced until a very general corruption had overspread the Christian world. We can be at no loss, therefore, to estimate the character of a new jurisdiction assumed by the Roman Pontiff over the provincial churches, during such a period. The "very first appeal of any note" was that of the heresiarch, Pelagius, and his disciple, Celestius, from the sentence of an African synod, by whom their doctrine had been condemned. This occurred not earlier than the commencement of the fifth century. The claims of the haughty Pontiff, then newly called to the papal chair, were, however, firmly resisted by the Africans. They convened another synod at Carthage, in which they reviewed and confirmed their former decision, without paying the slightest deference to the authority of Pope Zozimus, notwithstanding he had already proceeded so far as to depose and excommunicate two of their presbyters. This was not the first, no was it the last, instance in which the church was indebted for the

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have said, in furtherance of the great ends of her institution may set up and regulate whatever offices she finds convenient; and, calling men to fill these offices, she may invest them with whatever powers she pleases. But every church must have a minister of one kind or another; and the inherent rights of the ministry remain the same, although in the regulations of office they may not all be called into exercise. Thus *inherently* a local preacher has the right to administer all the ordinances of the church; but Methodism devolves that duty on the travelling preachers, and does not call the local preacher to perform it. But what Methodist will say that a man, called of God and the church to preach the Gospel, might not, with the consent of the church, lawfully and effectually administer every ordinance of the church? Or who will deny that the administration of these ordinances by the local preachers of America is valid and effectual? Not having the same lofty notions of inherent rights as some appear to have, we are content with things as they are established amongst us; we wish not for any change; all we desire is to be allowed to go on, and serve our generation, without being trampled upon and degraded in our office by the dominant party in the Conference.

On another ground, and so far as our question is concerned, Mr. B. is equally wide of the mark in his appeal to Scripture in support of the right of ministers to rule the church. Our notions on this subject are not so relaxed as Mr. B. may imagine. Were we called upon to address the members of our classes on this head, we should strenuously enforce on them the duty of paying all proper deference and respect to their ministers; and, doubtless, in the language of many of the passages of Scripture which Mr. B. quotes. A man who should unreasonably oppose, or disrespectfully treat, a minister, would receive no countenance or indulgence from us. But, admitting all this, what has it to do with the question; which is, not how far Christians in general are bound to obey their ministers, but whether the judgment and conscience of the church, as expressed in the decisions of her local presbytery, are to be overruled and set aside by the will of the minister? All the texts of Scripture which Mr. B. can collect will never establish such a right in the ministry; and one would really think, that to state the question would be a sufficient refutation of so monstrous a claim! We recommend those who are in any danger of being infected by the servile principles, now so zealously inculcated, to inform themselves, from standard writers, as to the practice of the primitive church in the first and second centuries; and this practice they will find to accord with the spirit inculcated by our Lord.—Matt. xx. 25-28. (See Campbell on the Gospels, vol. iv. p. 129.)



defence of her liberties to the sable sons of Africa. It is satisfactory to know, that in this affair of the appeal, the ambitious patriarch of Rome was foiled in all his endeavours to establish his prerogative; and that, at length, he found himself under the necessity of anathematizing as impious what, in his zeal for power, he had pronounced to be innocent. "In the whole affair," remarks a learned writer, "Rome evidently showed that, with her, doctrine was ever but a secondary consideration, the primary object was invariably power"—a remark which some reverend aspirants of the present day would do well to consider! How the church proceeded in determining all cases which arose within her local presbytery, we have shown in a note, page 77. The point to which we now invite attention is, that for several centuries no such thing was known as an appeal, in any case, from the judgment of the church, to that of a council of ministers exclusively, judging and deciding in ecclesiastical affairs independently of the church. The introduction of such appeals was the subtle device of Antichrist, designed to advance the dominion of the priesthood, productive of no good whatever to the church, but tending directly and surely to enslave and corrupt her!

2. An appellent jurisdiction from the judgment of the local presbyteries of every society and circuit throughout the Methodist Connexion, you claim for the Methodist Conference! A very modest claim, certainly! that you are to be the absolute and final arbiters of the religious liberties, rights, and privileges, of about half-a-million of people; and if to the societies, we add the congregations that attend our ministry, we may say, of several millions of people. As this claim extends, of course, to all our foreign stations, it will invest you with a spiritual supremacy over a territorial surface, which places you nearly on a level with papal Rome, as to extent of jurisdiction! As usual with you, and with all who have ambition to prefer such claims, to claim and to take for granted is the same thing! When, therefore, we look for some proof or argument in support of this high pretension, we have still nothing but bold assertion and unblushing assurance! You condescend not to reason upon your imaginary right; you cite not a single authority, nor make the slightest appeal to the fundamental laws of the Connexion! You simply assert, and of course we are expected to admit, that "against the possible abuse of which checks themselves [the Concessions of 1797] an APPEAL *always lay* to the Conference from *any person whatever thinking himself aggrieved.*"—Watson, p. 9.

How is it possible to reason with a man who thus takes everything for granted, and makes the boldest assertions without adducing the slightest evidence? We deny this appellent jurisdiction thus claimed for the Methodist Conference! We admit in them no right whatever to receive or determine any appeals, except against the proceedings and conduct of travelling preachers. This is our answer, and a sufficient answer. We are not to be called upon to prove the negative of an unfounded claim. They who prefer claims to power and authority over their fellow-Christians, are bound to make them out and to support them by proof.

Our friends, however, throughout the Connexion are anxious for information. Although, therefore, you are answered, it may be desirable to afford them further satisfaction. For their sake alone we extend these remarks.



3. Whilst boldly asserting, and dogmatising in support of, this high and haughty claim, you appear painfully conscious, that there is not a single argument which can be brought against the judgment of the local presbyteries,—against leaders' meetings and local preachers' meetings; which may not with equal or still greater effect be brought against the Conference. Our controversy is not so much with the Methodist Conference as with your party, by whom that Conference has been so lamentably committed and dishonoured. We are therefore happy in being relieved from the task of pressing this argument against the Conference by your own admission. "You may, indeed, say that the Conference itself may fall into the very evils to which you suppose a particular society to be liable. This I grant."—Watson, p. 14. Do you indeed grant this? then there is an end of all pretence for removing the jurisdiction from the local presbyteries. Were we to handle this argument, we should prove that the Conference, subject to the prevalence of parties like that which now predominates, is much more in danger of falling into these evils than the local meetings, but this admission is sufficient for our argument. The general remarks by which you would gloss it over, are too meagre and futile to require exposure; "great bodies are less liable to change (to become a prey to faction and party) than smaller ones!" "A Connexion like ours has within itself more internal checks and counteractions than Independency!" "It necessarily makes the best provision, which anxious care and prudent foresight can devise, against corruptions!"—And is it really on such pleas as these that we are called upon to surrender the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797 to the ambitious party in the Methodist Conference! The Methodist Connexion (not the Conference, you do not pretend that) has indeed more internal checks and counteractions than Independency, for which we never contended, and with which we have nothing to do. Our fathers, in 1797, did, indeed, make the best provisions which anxious care and prudent foresight could devise against corruption! But these checks and counteractions, these prudent provisions, are to be found in the fundamental laws of the Connexion, and not in your deceptive reasonings.

4. If we touch lightly your party, and enter not more fully into its history and conduct, it is not that we have not been furnished with ample materials, but because we are unwilling to prejudice the Conference in the estimation of the public more than their own weakness in submitting to this party has already done. We hope that they will still have the spirit and the prudence to redeem themselves. It is high time that they were roused; for assuredly the Connexion will not much longer endure the measures of this party. In them we see realised the fears of the two Wesleys, and, indeed, all that the Methodist Connexion ever had seriously to fear! "John," said Mr. Charles Wesley to his brother, "there will arise men in your Conference who will overturn the Connexion." Mr. Wesley faintly replied, "I hope not, brother!" That Mr. Wesley was, however, painfully apprehensive of this result, is proved by his letter to the Conference of 1791, written with his dying hand, and inserted in the Minutes of Conference of that year, vol. i. p. 234. Mr. Wesley was afraid that the one hundred preachers whom, by the deed of 1784, he had constituted the *LEGAL* Conference, might avail themselves of the provisions of that deed to assume superiority over their brethren. The original preachers of the hundred, however, acted as faithful and

disinterested men. Their business was to do the work of Him that sent them. They wanted, in general (we speak of them as a body), neither power nor distinction beyond what this work necessarily gave them. They, therefore, immediately resolved, that all the preachers in full connexion should enjoy every privilege which the members of the HUNDRED enjoyed. (Minutes of Conference, 1791.) They determined that all vacancies, as they occurred in the HUNDRED, should be filled up by SENIORITY, and retained nothing to themselves but the election of the President and the Secretary, according to the terms of the deed. All this was equitable and just. It was more; it was a model of disinterestedness and liberality, and proves both the wisdom and purity of the original Conference. The only distinction which could tempt ambition amongst the junior preachers—viz., to become members of the HUNDRED, could now only be gained by seniority; and the only offices which demand superior talent and experience, were amply provided for, by the eligibility of one hundred fathers of the Connexion.

In the lapse of about twenty years from the death of Mr. Wesley, a faction arose amongst some of the junior preachers, who boasted superior talents, and complained of the want of sufficient scope and excitement to employ these talents for the good of the Connexion. By the decision of the Conference of 1791, to which we have referred, these men had all the power and privilege, of course, that their brethren had, and equal opportunity of serving the Connexion. The best way of serving the church would, doubtless, have been to imitate Mr. Wesley and the apostles, in faith, zeal, and labours; Methodism always afforded ample scope for men of this description, and they who had hearts to follow so bright an example did not want motive. But this party thought it an intolerable hardship, that they could not leap over the heads of the *senior* brethren, and become members of the HUNDRED, before those whom length of service pointed out as first entitled to that honour. They might perchance to die early in life; and, in that event, could never have an opportunity of displaying their great talents as President and Secretary of the Conference! Although, in every respect, on an equality with their brethren, they had the face to talk of the "bitter herbs" of servitude; and insisted, that a double apprenticeship of fourteen years was, in all conscience, a sufficient qualification for any office in Methodism! "Methodism," it has been said, "is as much opposed to democracy as to sin;" and yet it should seem, that she has not been able to preserve even her Conference pure from that infectious spirit, worse than democracy,—a spirit which loudly talks of popular rights, and eagerly grasps the reins of power! This popular party increased; and, after disturbing several Conferences with their claims and clamours, they at last bore down all opposition. We copy the following passages from CROWTHER'S PORTRAITURE OF METHODISM:—

"On Monday, July 25, 1814, the seventy-first Conference began at Bristol, and continued until the evening of Wednesday, the 10th of August. Dr. Adam Clarke was chosen President, and Mr. Jabez Bunting, Secretary. Prior to the choosing of these officers, it was agreed (contrary to former practice) that all who shall have travelled fourteen years, shall vote in the choice of the President and Secretary. All such, who were present, voted by ballot, along with the legalised Hundred."

"At the same time, it was agreed, that whereas we had formerly

filled up the vacancies in the Hundred according to seniority in the candidates, that henceforth, when there are four vacancies, three of these shall be filled up by seniority, and the fourth by the ballot of the Conference, without regard to seniority. It was upon this ground that Mr. Bunting was chosen a member of the Hundred, and thereby became eligible to the office of principal Secretary to the Conference.” — *Portraiture of Methodism*, p. 160.

Ambition, thus trampling on the rights of the senior preachers, who, by patient labour and long service, were become entitled to admission under the old regulation, but were now rudely thrust back, eagerly seized the propitious moment, and by a bold effort leaped first into the Hundred, and then into office, without waiting to take breath! The great object being now realized, the party for some time conducted itself with tolerable propriety. They required this time gradually to fill up their ranks, and consolidate their newly acquired strength. There was, also, still a sufficient number of the old men of weight and influence to command respect. But these gradually declined and died. At length their number became small, and they were soon made to feel the full effects of their imprudence! But our object is not an attack upon the Conference; we therefore, notwithstanding we are thereby prevented a just exposure of your party, throw a veil over many things which we should otherwise state. It was necessary, however, to go thus far into particulars, in order that we might understand what that government is, which claims an appellant jurisdiction over the Connexion, and the final decision of every question affecting the local interests and the religious rights and privileges of the circuits and societies.

5. That Mr. Wesley ever contemplated any such jurisdiction as vested in the Conference, is not probable, from the fact of his total silence on the subject. Where does he ever intimate such a thing? Mr. Wesley established in the Conference an absolute jurisdiction over its own members, the preachers; and against them an *appeal*, therefore, *always* lay to the Conference. It is by not distinguishing this right of appeal against preachers, from that which you are anxious to establish against the local jurisdictions, as well as from the acknowledged inattention of our people generally to the principles of our constitution, that some colour has of late been given to your novel claims. But Mr. Wesley's opinion of the judgment of synods and conclaves generally, may be gathered from the account he has inserted in the Magazine of the Synod of Dort. Episcopius, one of the Remonstrants, said, as he went out of that assembly, “Let God judge between the synod and us, concerning the crafts, the deceits, and the lies laid to our charge!” The Leeds people, we believe, are now saying pretty much the same thing concerning the treatment of their case by the last Conference! And what else can we say, when we turn to the Minutes of the last Conference, to your “Affectionate Address,” and to the Methodist Magazine? The passage, however, to which we allude, is as follows:—“Some foreign divines expressed a great uneasiness at the transactions of the synod against the Remonstrants. They said, ‘the Remonstrants have been wronged; they should not have been treated in that manner. We have been imposed upon by the Moderator (the President) and his cabal, who formed a synod among themselves, and concerted in private those things which they had a mind to bring to a good issue.’ Martinus

told his friends, 'I believe now what Gregory Nazianzen says,\* that he never had seen any council which had a happy success, but rather increased the evil instead of removing it. I declare, as well as that father, that I shall never more set my foot in any synod. O Dort! Dort! would to God I had never seen thee!' The same divine, having met a Remonstrant, told him, 'the synod is a mere farce, in which the politicians act the main part.'" We fear the Leeds people will think we are stating their case as it was disposed of at the last Conference; and especially, if we add, "The Remonstrants complained that they had been expelled for refusing to be judged by their adversaries. They said, it was no new thing to avoid the decisions of a partial synod;—that many doctors of the church, both ancients and moderns, had refused to appear before such assemblies; or went away when they perceived that their enemies were to be their judges; that, for the same reason, the Protestants would not submit to the judgment of the Council of Trent. They added, that in all civil courts a suspicion of partiality was one of the main reasons to except against a judge. They complained particularly of the Moderator," &c.—*Arminian Magazine*, vol. i. pp. 55, 148.

It was not to be expected, that after all this, Mr. Wesley should vest any such jurisdiction as that now claimed in the Methodist Conference. He did not, in fact, do so! He constituted the Conference for the sake of the Itinerancy; and he defined their powers by the Deed of Declaration of 1784. But neither in this deed, nor in any other document, did he ever authorize the Conference to hear and determine appeals from the local jurisdictions of the circuits and societies. On the contrary, he limited the sittings of the Conference to three weeks, at the utmost; a period which, considering the other business of the Conference, is utterly incompatible with the jurisdiction thus attempted. But we will not at present enter into the question of the Constitution of the Conference as a Court of Appeal. To those who have any acquaintance with such matters, the very idea is ridiculous.

This appellant jurisdiction, then, was not derived from Mr. Wesley; much less was it admitted by the delegates of 1795 and 1797! In the Plan of Pacification, the Concessions, and the Code of Laws, although these documents admit and invite appeals against travelling preachers, yet there is not a hint nor an allusion to any such power or jurisdiction in the Conference over the *local* presbyteries. Neither do we find any trace of it in the Minutes of Conference, nor in any of the writers on the constitution of Methodism; nor even in the Magazine. But of late that publication has been made subservient to the purposes of your party. Like the new jurisdiction claimed for special district meetings in *local* affairs, this appellant jurisdiction of the Conference rests entirely upon your novel and perverse construction of the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797—you can adduce no other authority for it! In the absence, however, of all authority on your part in support of these novel and unfounded claims, we shall, in our

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\* The passage from Gregory is as follows:—"Equidem ut vere quod res est scribam, prorsus decrevi fugere omnem conventum episcoporum; nullius enim concilii bonum exitum unquam vidi; concilia enim non minuunt mala, sed augent potius."—"To say the truth, I am utterly determined never to come to any council of bishops; for I never yet saw a good end of any council; for councils abate not evils, but rather increase them."

next section, produce you a direct and unimpeachable testimony against them.

XVI. We come now to meet a general objection to our "position," that "the Conference should not interfere," in any cases whatever, with the local jurisdictions;—that is, in the trial of local officers, the admission and expulsion of members, and the general management of local affairs. This "position," you tell us, "although much empty effort is used to deceive (all the deception is on your side, and it is very gross!), is *most easily refuted* by the fact, that this is a discovery for the first time made. It was never so understood, certainly, by preachers or people: never urged in any former dispute." The paragraph from which this passage is quoted, and which has excited our compassion, as being one of the most intemperate and splenetic in your book, thus concludes,—"Its novelty is, however, fatal to the argument; for a practical principle could never have been kept out of sight for more than thirty years."—Watson, p. 21. For your sake, we have suppressed the *personal* abuse which you have mixed up with the above argument.

To expect a man to reason whilst in such a temper, were in vain, we are not surprised, therefore, to discover here the same confusion of ideas, and the same want of precision, both of thought and argument, which distinguish you throughout. Our position is a *negative* position.—We *deny* the right of special district meetings and Conference to interfere in *local* affairs, except in the case of travelling preachers. You have not coolness, however, to distinguish between what is *negative* and what is *positive*! and, therefore, we are told that a *practical* principle could never have been kept out of sight for more than thirty years! That is true; but the practical principle is all on your side, not on ours! You claim the right of interference; this is the only practical principle involved in the question. Like most men, therefore, under the influence of strong passion, you have only injured yourself by this argument. As against us, it is utterly inapplicable and nugatory. But, as against yourself, it is a very good argument; and by it we have, at page 69, overturned your whole theory; "a practical principle could never have been kept out of sight more than thirty years!" Where, then, are your former special district meetings, resembling that at Leeds?—where the votes of thanks, and resolutions of the Conference, relating to such meetings? We have requested you to favour us with a sight of these printed resolutions and thanks.

But our position is "most easily refuted" by the fact of its "novelty!" We do not wish to break a bruised reed, and therefore pass direct to the argument. Many publications have appeared on the subject of the Methodist Constitution, since 1797; but not one that we ever met with, even hints at this right of interference by special district meetings, or at an appeal from the local jurisdictions to the Conference, in the matters in question. Mr. Myles, in his *Chronological History*, and Mr. Crowther, in his *Portraiture of Methodism*, both old preachers and parties to the treaty of 1797, have carefully set forth the powers and jurisdiction of the Conference and of district meetings; but they are evidently both strangers alike to the right of interference, and to the appellent jurisdiction! Several attacks on Methodism have appeared, in which the Conference has been charged with assuming and exercising tyrannical powers. The Concessions made to the people, in 1795 and 1797, have, in answer, been invariably pleaded, to show that the Conference claimed and exercised no *arbitrary* or



*absolute* power. All these publications, both histories and defences, treat of the Concessions; and particularly of the right of leaders' meetings, &c., in the admission and expulsion of local officers and members of society; but they all understand them as *positive* and *absolute*! There is no intimation of any right of interference in *extraordinary* cases; of any exceptional power to suspend the laws of the Connexion; or of any appellant jurisdiction! All these phantoms have sprung up with your party, and are only to be found in your modern publications! Now, "a practical principle could never have been kept out of sight for more than thirty years;" if, therefore, such rights ever existed, there must have existed some trace of them in Methodism!

But we are to prove everything, *negative* as well as *positive*; and, undertaking what you have no right to expect from us, we promised you, in our last section, a direct and unexceptionable testimony against these novel claims.

In the year 1804 there appeared an anonymous pamphlet, entitled "STRICTURES ON METHODISM, by a CAREFUL OBSERVER;" with a Latin motto in the title-page, which sufficiently indicates the character of the work. The writer, like yourself, deals only in general matters, and does not profess to go into particulars! His main object was a violent attack on the rights conceded to the local meetings by the Conference of 1797. Being of the true *ultra* school, he could discover nothing in the demand for these Concessions, but "the disorganizing spirit of the times," and "the mania for chimerical rights which was desolating Europe!" He could, moreover, talk us freely and as roundly as you and your party do, about anarchy, faction, insubordination, a capricious oligarchy, and a world of nonsense, which however it may apply to civil states, can have nothing to do with a voluntary religious society, in which men can only be ruled by conviction of what is right and proper. When we hear you mourning over the loss of absolute power by the Methodist Conference, we could almost vouch that you had stolen your dolorous dirges from the pages of this writer; for you vent the same heavy and plaintive notes, and in the same melancholy key! However, this author, though an enemy to our liberties, was an honest man. He betrays, unhappily, the spirit with which our fathers had to contend in 1797, when they wrung from the Conference this acknowledgment of their just and scriptural rights (we do not mean *popular* rights, we have never contended for them; we mean the rights of the *local* presbyteries,—of your co-ministers and co-pastors, the local preachers and leaders), but he does not, like you, attempt to subvert and deny them. We extract the following passages from this pamphlet:—

"The Conference, for the sake of peace, conceded to the clamorous faction who called themselves the people [the delegates of 1797! whom Mr. Vevers calls 'the friends of religious liberty, and of primitive and genuine Methodism'] one degree of authority after another, till they *put it out of their own power* to dismiss a leader from his office without the sanction of a leaders' meeting; or take a preacher, however qualified, into their Connexion, if a majority at a quarterly meeting should express its disapprobation. The leaders' meeting *being constituted judges of themselves and the people*, the transition was easy to their determining that no preacher should be continued a second year, if they resolved on his removal. This last degree of authority they assumed, for it was never conceded; but this does not



prevent their exercising it, *without control*, nor is there any appeal from their decision."

Again: "Beside, should the latter (the preachers) through passion or prejudice decide unjustly, the injured party may have THEM called to account for their conduct at the annual district meetings and Conference. In these assemblies, *charges against preachers* from any quarter are duly attended to; and every degree of weight is allowed to them which they justly merit. But *according to the new disorganizing plan adopted* (the Concessions of 1797), however unjust the decision of a leaders' meeting may be, the injured party HAS NO APPEAL."

The above quotations are sufficient; in them is contained all for which we contended in our Address and Resolutions; viz., That travelling preachers *only* are amenable to district meeting;—that, by the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797, leaders' meetings are constituted judges of *themselves and the people*;—and that their authority in these matters is *without control and without appeal*. Now, all this was published five and twenty years ago! What, then, becomes of your assertions, that the discovery was first made by us, and that it was never so understood, certainly, by preachers or people? Where now is your "most easy" refutation; and how is the novelty of our position fatal to the argument? Did you make all these assertions in total ignorance? That is hard to believe! but if we should admit such a palliation, for it is no excuse, what shall we say to the unmeasured abuse and *personal* insult, which you have mixed up with this pretence of novelty, and which now turns out to have no better foundation than your ignorance?

We adduce the above quotations, however, not merely to free our construction from the charge of *novelty*; but as a direct and unimpeachable testimony, from a very competent authority, in support of that construction. The pamphlet from which they are extracted, was written, as you doubtless are aware, by a Methodist preacher, of some note amongst you for intelligence and information; and who, a few years ago, was connected with the Magazine. What is still more important, he was one of the 145 preachers present at the Conference of 1797, who actually made the Concessions in question, and signed the solemn declaration, which we have copied from the Minutes of that year, as "voluntarily and in good faith" approving of, and engaging to comply therewith. Seven years after, he thought proper to publish his opinions on Methodism; and he openly avows his hostility to "the ceded and assumed powers of leaders and stewards." Was such a writer likely to overstate the powers he had concurred in granting?—or, did he not, after seven years' experience and reflection, fully understand them? His book was generally read: was it ever intimated, that this "Careful Observer" had misinterpreted the Concessions of 1797? We understand these Concessions precisely as he did; as they have often been explained to us by the old preachers; some of whom yet live, and who will not, and dare not, attest your new interpretation to be the correct one; and, therefore, several of these old men either withdrew, or voted against you, whilst others, though present, voted not at all, in the Leeds case, at the last Conference! We understood these Concessions as they were undoubtedly understood, both by preachers and people, until your party began their efforts to explain them away; and until you invented your novel counter-checks to overturn them. The present controversy, therefore,

differs from all former controversies on the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism in this;—that whereas, in all former disputes, the complainants have proceeded to demand a reform, or proposed alterations in that constitution; but, in the present case, we demand *nothing new*; we propose *no alteration*; we seek *no reform*: but, appealing to the constitution as laid down in 1797, we boldly and confidently charge the Methodist Conference (we mean your party) *with direct breaches of faith and treaty, and with open and shameful violations of that constitution!* You stand accused before the Methodist public and the world. A false delicacy alone would prevent our adding, you stand convicted!

XVII. It remains that we take a brief notice of some of your verbal criticisms on the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797. This task, indeed, is now become wholly unnecessary, as far as the main question between the Conference and the local presbyteries is concerned; for, having already shown that these Miscellaneous Regulations are no part of the constitution, as settled by treaty between the Conference and the delegates of that year, and that they were never understood as relating to the people, it matters but little what construction you may choose to put upon them.

Your verbal criticisms, indeed, can scarcely be deemed an attempt to shake our construction of such of the Miscellaneous Regulations as fell under our review, in the Address of this Circuit to the Conference. As we have already remarked, you pick out certain detached phrases from these rules, and annex some parenthetical exposition or gloss of your own; but which remains wholly unsupported by either authority or argument! Take, for example, your exposition of the first of the Miscellaneous Regulations. We copy the passage, so far as concerns our argument, verbatim; giving the selected passages from the rules in *italics*, and your glosses in the ordinary type.

“One of the provisions which follows, is that I have already adverted to, which empowers the President, ‘*when written to by any concerned,*’ preachers or people, ‘*to visit any circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with reference to Methodism,*’ a very general subject of inquiry; ‘*and, in union with the district committee, redress any grievance,*’ which must, of course, include all the evils that may be complained of, and which ordinary means were found inadequate to redress, whether the cause of the evil were a preacher or a local officer.”

Here is assertion enough, and all to be thus taken as “OF COURSE!” But there is no proof—no argument! And do you think, that this interpolation of the rule, with your mere exclamations and glosses, will be taken by any man possessed of ordinary sense, for an answer to the current argument of the London South Address; and particularly, to the general summary of that argument on this very rule, given at page 13 of that Address? We think no man, capable of reading this controversy, can be so weak. Answer from us is, therefore, quite unnecessary. Besides, we owe something to ourselves. There is a point below the level of which we cannot condescend. We therefore simply refer the reader back again to the London South Address. We have there fully and unanswerably proved, that this rule relates exclusively to the disturbance of a circuit by a travelling preacher. The inquiry is intended to ascertain the nature and degree of such preacher’s misconduct and imprudence; as well as to point out the particular redress which the circuit may be entitled to claim from the President and

the district meeting. It is proper, however, to meet here a charge which, towards the close of your pamphlet, you perpetually throw out against our method of quoting the Miscellaneous Regulations, in our Address to the Conference. In that Address we never professed to give all the rules relating to district meetings; nor all the Miscellaneous Regulations; and for this plain reason, they were *miscellaneous*, and several of them, therefore, had no relation to our subject. Our business was, not with district meetings *in general*, but with *special* district meetings; and particularly, with the right of such meetings to interfere in the *local* affairs of the circuits, where neither the conduct nor appointment of travelling preachers were concerned. Of all such rules as related to the subject we professed to give, and we have faithfully given, a true and literal copy. Those rules stand in our pages to the letter, as they stand in the Minutes of Conference.

You charge us with quoting the Concessions "in no very creditable manner;" and add, "the words of Conference, if your agent had fully quoted them, are, 'our district committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining but a *bare negative* in general.' " Let the reader now turn to page 7 of our Address to the Conference, where we profess to quote these Concessions, he will find the very words "*fully*," literally, and correctly transcribed! Thus, as usual, we are falsely accused and misrepresented! What is still worse on your part, whilst thus charging us with not quoting the passage fully, you suppress an important part of it; which, as we shall presently show, if you had introduced, would have overturned your whole argument in this very place! We give the whole passage, every syllable and every letter;—you suppress what makes directly against your argument; and, at the same time, have the face to accuse us of dishonourable quotation!

With the exception of a note, which we shall presently introduce, all your other complaints of misquotation are either general, and refer to no particular passage, and, therefore, cannot be confronted by a direct reference to the original rules; or, like the above instance, they are positively and absolutely false! This may be thought strong language, but we are accused of dishonourable conduct;—we therefore say, it is false! We have misquoted nothing; we have suppressed nothing; we have misrepresented nothing! Let the reader, who chooses to be at the pains, satisfy himself by comparing every rule with which we professed to have any concern, with the original rule, in the Minutes of Conference; and, if he can detect the omission or variation of a word or a syllable, he will do what we have not been able to do, after the most careful and exact examination?

We now introduce an admirable specimen at once of the *spirit* and the *integrity* of the party against whose usurpations we have ventured to raise our voice. We say, of the *party*, because, although you are the author, the slander has been fully adopted and re-echoed in the Methodist Magazine; or rather, in what was once the Methodist Magazine, but is now the perverted organ and engine of your party. It is as follows:—

"This intermediate rule is artfully left out, by the writer of the Address, for the sake of a dishonourable quirk. He would thus the more plausibly interpret the third of these regulations by the first; but even this does not serve his turn, for he is obliged to leave out a part even of the first!"

The charge brought against us in this "*affectionate*" note is

twofold; first, that we have omitted a part of the first of the Miscellaneous Regulations, relating to districts; and secondly, that we have wholly left out the second of these Regulations.

1. To the first of these charge we have none other reply to offer, than that already given,—it is false! What more can we say? The original regulation stands in the Minutes of Conference for 1797, vol. i. p. 378. It is transcribed in our Address, p. 7, 8. Not a word, not a syllable, not a letter, is either omitted or altered! The copy is literal, faithful, and correct! Will the reader believe this? Let him examine for himself. But the Methodist Connexion is not yet aware how far a preacher of your party (God forbid that we should be thought to speak here of Methodist preachers in general) will go, in order to traduce and vilify an opponent whom they cannot otherwise answer!

2. As to the second charge, that we have wholly omitted the second of these Miscellaneous Regulations, “for the sake of a dishonourable quirk;” we reply, that we have omitted several of these regulations for the very same “quirk;” or rather, for a very good and sufficient reason, viz., that they have no bearing on the question, and are not calculated to throw any light upon it! You were fully aware of this; and, therefore, whilst thus abusing us, you carefully, though most disingenuously, abstain *in this place* from quoting the rule, for its production would have put you out of countenance! You therefore content yourself with telling us, that “it is a provision made expressly for cases of a specially ‘critical’ and ‘extraordinary’ nature!” We must now produce it for you. In the Minutes of Conference it stands thus:—

“The chairman of each district, in conjunction with his brethren of the committee, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of the laws, as far his district is concerned.”—Minutes, 1797, vol. i. p. 379.

Thus the simple production of the rule is an answer to your complaint; for the question between us is, whether districts are at all “concerned” in *local* affairs, except as regards travelling preachers; and, as the regulation limits the responsibility of the chairman to extend only “*so far as his district is concerned*,” it is clear that our question must be first decided, before this regulation can have any bearing on the subject! You cannot pretend that there is anything in this rule to throw any light on the question; or to determine whether districts are, or are not, concerned in local affairs. And can any absurdity be greater than to suppose that the Conference should make the chairman and preachers of the district responsible for the “execution of the laws” in our local meetings, of which they are not members, and at which they have no right to be present? Who ever heard that the chairman of the district and his brethren were members of, and had a right to sit in, a leaders’ meeting?

But this is not all. You are particularly unfortunate whenever you appeal to the laws in support of your newly-assumed powers! The Conference, twice alarmed by these assemblies of lay delegates, were most anxious to prevent any future occasion for such assemblies. This could only be done by compelling the preachers faithfully to observe the treaties which had been made with those of 1795 and 1797. Hence this great anxiety in the Conference to have the laws executed! And this anxiety continued for some years, until this dread of the lay delegates, in some measure, wore off. Thus we find,

that it was not only the Conference of 1797, but several successive Conferences, that enforced on the districts the observance of the laws ; and no rule of interpretation can be more fair and just, than to compare these several and successive injunctions, thus enforced from year to year. By this means we shall ascertain precisely what those laws were which the Conference were so anxious to have executed, and who were the apprehended delinquents. We select the following instances from the minutes :—

1798.—“ Q. Can any amendment be made in our yearly district meetings ?

“ A. Yes ; in the examination of character, not only morality and religion, in a general sense, should be kept in view, but a particular inquiry must be made, whether our rules, as set forth in the Large Minutes, are observed by each individual in every station.”—Minutes of Conference, vol. i. p. 416.

1799.—“ Q. It has been required by our Minutes, that the characters and conduct of the preachers, in respect to their fulfilment of the rules to which they have subscribed, should be particularly inquired into in the district meetings ;—have the district committees complied with this ?

“ A. Not so fully, we fear, as they should, in general. But we insist that in future all district committees shall be exact in fulfilling their duty in this respect.”—Minutes of Conference, vol. ii. p. 26.

From the above extracts it is clear, 1. That the laws, the execution of which is thus enforced on district meetings, are those to which the preachers had “ subscribed ;” that is, the Concessions and Code of Laws, solemnly signed by the 145 preachers in 1797, for securing the newly-ceded rights of the local meetings against the encroachments of ministerial power ! Were any other laws of Conference so signed ? Were the Miscellaneous Regulations thus subscribed ? 2. That the parties, against whose violations these provisions are made, were travelling preachers, “ in every station,” and the “ particular inquiry” directed by these regulations, is into THEIR conduct, in respect to THEIR fulfilment of those rules. 3. That on this account, therefore, these strict injunctions are laid upon the chairman and committees of districts ; because, as travelling preachers, the apprehended delinquents are subject to their jurisdiction ! The necessary consequence of all this is, that every one of your arguments in favour of a right of interference in *local* affairs by special district meetings, derived from this injunction, “ to execute the laws,” falls to the ground ! Instead of omitting this regulation, “ for the sake of a dishonourable quirk,” and “ to serve a turn,” our turn is thus evidently served by its production ! It is altogether in favour of our construction, and was intended by the Conference of 1797 as an additional guarantee and security of our rights and privileges against your encroachments, if you had the good faith to execute it ! Thus the “ quirks” and “ turns” are eminently your own ; and you have, doubtless, earned to yourself, by this display of ingenuity, a renown which can only perish with your name !

The *fourth* of the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797, relating to districts, we had also omitted in our Address to the Conference. This regulation is so manifestly foreign to our question, that you do not indeed accuse us of omitting it “ for the sake of a dishonourable quirk ;” but you, nevertheless, drag it in, as an illustration of a



general right of interference even with quarterly meetings. It is as follows :—

“The Conference recommends it to the superintendents of circuits, to invite, on all important occasions, the chairmen of the respective districts to be present at their quarterly meetings.”—Minutes of Conference, vol. i. p. 379.

We notice this “attempt” as a very fair specimen of your method of construing the rules of Conference, and working out your “inherent rights.” Having simply quoted this recommendation “to invite the chairman to be present;” you add, “and thus to interfere officially, by advice and influence, in the local affairs of circuits.” Thus, by a gloss entirely your own, and wholly unsupported, an *invitation* “to be present,” is unceremoniously converted into a *right* “to interfere officially!” Still this can only apply to a chairman; yet, in eight lines more, which you expend in abusing us, this chairman, by another “turn,” swells into “the Methodist Conference or any district meeting!” And the right of these interlopers “to interfere officially,” is made out from this mere recommendation “to invite the chairman” to be present at a quarterly meeting!!! This is getting on pretty fast; but pray pause one moment, and reflect—

1. That no right whatever is here vested in the chairman, for it is implied that he cannot enter a quarterly meeting on his own authority, but must wait for an invitation.

2. That the Conference, having just entered into a solemn covenant with our fathers in 1797, could have no right after that to alter the constitution of our quarterly meetings; and to strengthen its own influence in such meetings by the introduction of new *official* representatives. The only representatives of the Conference which we acknowledge in quarterly meetings, are the travelling preachers of the circuit. The Conference of 1797 were fully aware of this, and therefore they venture here on a mere “recommendation.” It is not a rule; for such a rule the Conference, on Mr. VEVERS’ principle, had no power to make; and no right can flow from a recommendation.

3. Much less has the superintendent a right to alter the constitution of our quarterly meetings, by the introduction of new official characters. Whether, therefore, he can comply with this recommendation “to invite the chairman,” must depend upon whether he can obtain leave so to do from the quarterly meetings.

4. And that there is some difference between “an invitation to be present” and a right to “interfere officially,” is proved by recent practice in the London circuits. With a view to preserve a kind and affectionate feeling between the circuits, it was usual “to invite” the preachers of all the London circuits “to be present” at all the quarterly meetings of the several circuits. These brethren came and dined with us, and we rejoiced to see them. But it was at length found that they brought with them rather too much of *l’esprit du corps*, and that it was impossible to prevent them from “interfering” in our discussions, which were thereby subjected to undue influence. Members of the quarterly meeting complained that they were borne down by a phalanx of preachers. We were, therefore, under the necessity of withdrawing these invitations, after some warm discussions; and simply because these kind friends could not be made to understand the distinction between “an invitation to be present” and a right to “interfere officially” in our affairs!

5. Your gloss is directly in the teeth of the rule of 1792, which



declares that the chairman "must never individually *interfere* with any other circuit than his own." This rule was republished by the Conference of 1797, and proves that they understood the difference between an "invitation to be present" and a "right to interfere officially."

Another case, in which you think we are "manifestly perplexed" (that is, which you have laboured hard to perplex), affords us no perplexity at all! It arises out of another of these Miscellaneous Regulations, by which, "in cases which, in the judgment of the chairman, cannot be settled in the *ordinary* district meeting, the 'power' of the district is to be increased by the addition of three superintendents [why did you omit here the words, three 'of the nearest' superintendents? was this a sore spot in the Leeds case?]; and the district, thus constituted, is to settle everything until the Conference. This 'settling everything,' you tell us, means settling matters of charge and accusation against preachers only, but allows of no interference with 'local jurisdictions.'" And pray, what is there in the rule, or in anything you have said upon it, to the contrary? May not an *extraordinary* case arise of the disturbance of a circuit by the folly or misconduct of a travelling preacher? Had not many such cases arisen previous to 1797? Was it not in relation to the Bristol case, in which preachers of the first consideration and influence in the Connexion headed the several contending parties, that this very rule was framed? And have no such cases happened since that period? You admit that our interpretation is correct, as far as it goes; but you wish to extend it to the people. There is nothing in the language of the rule to countenance or justify such extension of its application; and it would be contrary to what we have abundantly proved to be the true object and design of all these Miscellaneous Regulations relating to districts. The rule, as we apply it, is proper and necessary. Suppose some leviathan of your party to be arraigned before a district meeting, for attempting some of your new schemes against the liberties of the church; might not the chairman, knowing the influence and strength of this party, justly conceive, that the district committee required to be strengthened, under this rule, by calling in, if he could find them, three neighbouring superintendents not of the party? But these Regulations, formed for the protection of the people, are losing all their value by the overgrown influence of your party, which renders it impossible to have them honestly executed! Thus, in the Leeds case, instead of putting Mr. Grindrod on his trial for his illegal conduct in suspending Mr. M. Johnson, in opposition to the judgment and verdict of his brethren, which was their proper business, the special district meeting suffered the real delinquent to escape, and taking part with him, they could find no redress of grievances for the people but in anathemas and expulsion! And why do you play upon the words, "settling everything?" Do these words really relate to every dispute, charge, or case, which may arise in the Connexion, so as to give you universal dominion; or do they obviously, and beyond dispute, extend to nothing more than "everything" relating to that particular case, to "settle" which, the three superintendents are called in? Nothing can be more absurd than your reasonings on this very rule; we might go on to expose them, as in other cases we have done; but it is enough! The language of these Miscellaneous Regulations, when taken in connexion with their evident design and object, is sufficiently clear and explicit. With the people, the Conference of

1797 had already treated; their rights were defined and settled by "the Concessions and Code of Laws;" and, having finished this treaty, the delegates broke up, and returned home. The Conference, however, had another party to deal with; viz., the preachers, whose conduct in the circuits had occasioned all these troubles.—In relation to them the Miscellaneous Regulations were framed. These Regulations very properly require, that, whenever a circuit is thus disturbed, the president shall visit such circuit, and inquire into their affairs with respect to Methodism,—an inquiry which is necessary, not only to ascertain whether the preacher be to blame, but also the nature and extent of his misconduct or imprudence. The President is then, "in conjunction with the district meeting, to redress any grievance, and to settle everything till the Conference," which alone has the power finally to deal with the accused preacher. Can anything be more natural and proper than this provision? "Aye! but," quoth you, "here are *affairs*, and *grievances*, and *inquiry*, and *authority* to *settle everything* mentioned in the rules!" and, abandoning the whole scope and design of the rules, you pick out and detach these delightful terms and phrases, and applying them generally, you put the whole Connexion under the ban of special district meetings, because, forsooth, they are to inquire into and redress the grievances inflicted on the circuits by imprudent or turbulent preachers, during the intervals of Conference! We have already told you that, in this way, anything that it entereth into the mind of man to conceive, may be readily proved from either Bible or Minutes!

It is thus that you reply throughout to all our arguments on the construction of the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797! We should be ashamed to follow you any further; it could answer no end in fixing their true meaning and signification, which is already more than accomplished; and could only lead us to a further exposure of your "paltry sophistries," "dishonest attempts," and "artful and designing leadings" (we employ your own *affectionate* terms), of which we believe the public as well as ourselves will have had a surfeit. We lament, indeed, the effects of such principles and such conduct as your book exhibits, on a class of young preachers who ought now to be rising into eminence and usefulness in the Connexion, but the foundation of whose ruin will be surely laid, in their imbibing this *mania* about inherent rights and ministerial rule? Thus, a junior preacher, lately advanced to a superintendency, sporting in wonderful *naïveté* with the inadvertencies of a letter which appears to have been irregularly published at Liverpool, comes forward as a redoubtable champion at your heels; and tells his readers, "in proving that it (the London South Address) is essentially false in the statement from which its wonderful reasoning is projected, I was steady to my purpose!" We have a kind feeling towards this young man; and, therefore, we spare his follies, and suffer in him these absurdities to pass! but we advise him to seek a better model than can be found in your party, and to follow those only who follow Christ. Those ministers who imitate Christ and his Apostles in love to the church, are sure to gain the affections of the people. This is the only legitimate source of ministerial authority! He who rules by love, will never want the power to do good to the bodies and souls of men;—the only power which a Christian minister can lawfully claim!

We have repeatedly called for some instances, like that at Leeds, of special district meetings interfering to remodel and test leaders'

meetings, and to try local officers and members. Throughout the whole controversy on this case, however, no example of a similar case has been adduced. You have, indeed, mentioned a long journey imposed upon you, to hold a special district meeting under the rule of 1797; and, from your telling us that the men who called you to this task "had not then discovered that a circuit had an inviolable independency within itself," as well as from your suppressing all particulars, you would evidently convey to us that the cases were parallel! This is bad, very bad! The facts of that case are now before us; we would have entered into them, but they have already been partially laid before the public. Suffice it, then, to say, the charge there was brought by the people against the superintendent! It was, therefore, anything but a case in point! It was a case in which the interference of a special district meeting is admitted and contended for in our Address to the Conference! What are the public to think of the suppression of this fact? And this is the only case you can adduce in support of your novel construction of the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797!

XVIII. Wearied with sifting all this empty chaff, and disgusted with these attempts to pervert the plain sense and meaning of the Miscellaneous Regulations of 1797, the reader will naturally be anxious to know what you intend to make of the direct Concessions of 1797; and how you will interpret the very large and liberal sacrifices in respect to authority, made by these Concessions to the local presbyteries! If you will persist in your novel and interested interpretation of these Miscellaneous Regulations, it becomes your duty to reconcile that interpretation with the solemn treaty made with our fathers; and to tell us what that authority was which was given up, in relation to district meetings, in 1797. But here you are greatly at a loss! In a pamphlet of thirty-one pages only, it is not until you reach the twenty-seventh that you venture even to touch on a point which forms the most important and decisive obstruction to your novel claims! And when, at last, we expect you are coming to the point, we find scarcely half a dozen lines of mingled assertion and abuse, before you fly off from the subject without attempting either argument or proof! We do not recollect to have seen, in any writer, a more miserable attempt to bolt on one side, and avoid an awkward question! "Speaking of their Concessions, they (the Conference) say, 'our district committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining.' But he has quoted them in no very creditable manner; for the 'authority' spoken of is not the authority of the districts in matters of discipline, for the same Minutes make the districts responsible 'for the execution of the laws' (here, whilst complaining of our quotation, you suppress the words, 'as far as his district is concerned,' which, as we have already shown, completely negative this assertion), but it is their authority in *financial* matters, and in them only; for the words of Conference, if your agent had fully quoted them, are, 'Our district committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining, but a *bare negative* in general.'"—Watson, p. 27.

After what we have already said, it can scarcely be necessary to inform the reader that this charge of mutilated quotation is, like all the rest of these charges, a positive falsehood! Let him turn to page 7 of our Address to the Conference, and he will find the whole passage literally and correctly transcribed from the Minutes of Conference. But here again, whilst thus unright-

eously accusing us, you suppress another part of the Concession, which overturns your position entirely, for it is immediately added, "but a bare negative in general, and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draft of the stations." This is certainly not a "financial" matter, and proves, therefore, that the authority of districts, thus given up in 1797, was not limited to such matters and "to them ONLY!" And so conscious were you of this, that this last clause of the Concession is not to be found in any part of your Address; you have suppressed it altogether!

That the "sacrifices in respect to authority, made on behalf of the whole body of travelling preachers," and of district meetings in particular—and of which sacrifices the Conference of 1797 make so great a merit—related "to their authority in financial matters, and in them ONLY," is as far from the truth as those other bold and hazardous assertions by which you painfully strive to uphold a bad cause. This will appear from the following considerations, several of which it was impossible that you should have overlooked:—

1. That the CONCESSIONS of 1797 are, as we have already remarked, arranged under distinct heads. The first *head* is thus entitled:—"I. In respect to finances or money matters." Under this head it is provided, that "all bills, &c., shall first meet with the approbation of the quarterly meeting, and be signed by the general steward of the circuit, before they can be brought to the district committee." Thus in *financial* matters the authority of the district is reduced to a "bare negative." But the second head of the Concessions is entitled—"II. In respect to all OTHER temporal matters," evidently in *contradistinction* to, and *exclusively* of, "financial matters," which were already disposed of under the first head. Now here, again, the very same restriction is repeated, and the authority of the district is thereby again reduced in these OTHER matters also to a "bare negative in general." From this simple statement, to go no further, your assertion falls to the ground, that the authority spoken of as thus given up "is their authority in *financial* matters, and in them ONLY."

2. Having stated the direct Concessions, the Conference of 1797 add a summary of them under six general divisions, as relating not merely to "financial" and "other temporal concerns" (in relation to which they distinctly and specifically declare that the "district meetings have nothing left them but a negative"), but also to the "admission and expulsion of members, the appointment and removal of local officers," &c. This summary being completed, the Conference proceed to state, in a concluding paragraph, what they conceived to be the general effect of these Concessions, and particularly in relation to district meetings. "We may," say they, "taking ALL THESE THINGS into our view [is it not unaccountable effrontery, when the Conference say "all these things," to contradict the direct Concessions, by excepting what had just been expressly conceded,—the right of *admitting* and *expelling* members, and *trying local officers*?], truly say, that such have been the sacrifices we have made, that our district committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining, but a bare negative in general [thus repeating this phrase in the general summary which they had before specifically applied to "financial matters"], and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draft of the stations of the preachers." Is there one word here that limits the authority, thus given up, *exclusively* to matters of finance? Is it not manifestly given up in relation

to "all these things" previously enumerated? The exceptions are stated, and they harmonise with the true construction. On what authority do you presume to add to their number by excepting "matters of discipline?"

3. That this surrender by the Conference of the "authority" of district committees, did not relate to matters of "*finance*, and to them *only*," is put beyond all question and controversy, by the nature of that particular exception, which, in every instance, you have carefully and studiously suppressed; and which, as we have already remarked, is not to be found in any part of your book! It is a fundamental rule of logic, as laid down by all the great masters of the art, that "*Exceptio probat regulam de rebus non exceptis*,"—"the exception proves the rule with regard to the thing ruled." In other words, you cannot except out of a grant or concession what was not contained in it. The thing excepted must be of the same nature, kind, or quality, with the thing granted. The thing granted is thus expressed by the Conference, "Our district committees have hardly any *authority* remaining;" and, in another place, "have *nothing* left them." The exceptions are, "but a bare negative in general; and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draft of the stations." Now, granting that the "bare negative" related to "matters of finance;" yet if the authority of districts thus conceded were "their authority in matters of finance, and in them *ONLY*," how could the right of appointing a representative, to assist in drawing up a rough draft of the stations, be excepted out of such a grant? This single rule knocks down all your attempts to limit these large and liberal "sacrifices in respect to authority" to "matters of finance *ONLY*;" and, with all who value reason and common sense, will settle the question for ever, in favour of that genuine construction which we, and the "Careful Observer" of 1804, have so fully established.

4. Your assertion, that it was the authority of district committees in "matters of *finance*, and in them *only*," that was given up in 1797, is contradicted on every hand. It does not harmonize with the other Concessions contained in the same treaty. If the Conference could not surrender what you so fondly term "the inherent rights of ministers and pastors," those rights must undoubtedly have been stronger in a superintendent, who has a direct charge in relation to the flock, than in any district meeting which, in its collective capacity, can have no such relation but through the superintendent. How, then, could the Conference surrender into the hands of the local authorities "by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority," in all the various matters of *DISCIPLINE* enumerated under the several heads of the Concessions? Here you have the confidence to tell us, that the Conference could not, and did not, surrender a particle of this authority, but merely granted "certain checks upon its exercise!" But this is a gratuitous contradiction and falsification of the very language of the Concessions. The words of the Conference of 1797 are—"We have given up to you by far the greatest part of the superintendent's *authority*." You cannot endure this; and yet, unable to explain it away (for the language is too clear and express to admit of that), you press to the issues of a desperate cause by a flat negation of the conceded right. This is desperation indeed. It sets, not only reason, but honour and conscience, at defiance! Again: if we have really no ministry but that of travelling preachers,—if all our discipline belongs to them *exclusively*, as of *inherent* right,—what



becomes of the great "sacrifices in respect to *authority*, on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers," made by this Conference? Are all these matters, notwithstanding the express language of the Concessions, to be interpreted as belonging to "matters of finance, and to them *only*?" Truly you are very much out of your place as a Methodist preacher with such notions as these. But away with this folly! There were certain preachers in 1795 and 1797, who, like the men of your party in the present day, began to push the powers of districts beyond the just boundary. They assumed as against the people what, as we have shown in our Address to the Conference, had only been granted to them as against travelling preachers; and, arrogating to themselves supreme authority over the local jurisdictions, they roused the Connexion to a determined stand against their encroachments. This is matter of fact and history.\* An appeal to the pamphlets published prior to the Conference of 1797, will abundantly prove that the reform of districts was one main and general object with our fathers. You admit that the Conference made some Concessions as to *financial* matters (which does not appear to have been at all a *special* ground of complaint against the district meetings), but, as to what was the real cause of complaint—their interference in matters of discipline—you think the Conference answered the men of 1797 by enacting the Miscellaneous Regulations—that is, according to your interpretation, by doubling the powers complained of! You thus make the Conference answer the delegates as Rehoboam replied to the men of Israel, "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."—1 Kings xii. 14. And we are to believe, that the delegates of 1797 rose up and thanked the Conference for all this kind consideration, and for their very liberal Concessions!

But you add, "If the authority there spoken of as given up, were the authority of interfering with your local discipline, you yourselves acknowledge that the Conference have retained at least 'a bare negative' upon your proceedings, which is no small degree of interference."—Watson, p. 27. Thus, a "bare negative" is no small positive! The reservation, moreover, is to the district meeting, and not to the Conference: why change the terms? We have told you that this expression occurs as a repetition in a *general summary* of what had been previously *specifically* applied to matters of finance, and other

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\* The preachers of that day, as in the present, contended for the necessity of this power, in *local* affairs, on the same ground on which district meetings had been originally introduced in relation to the preachers, viz., as a substitute for Mr. Wesley's authority. This argument was met by a demand, on the part of the people, that lay delegates should be incorporated with the district committee; and this was a main principle in the plan of executive government submitted by the delegates of 1797 to the Conference. The Conference of 1797, rather than admit the delegates into either Conference or district meeting, gave up the power of districts, thus newly claimed. We think no impartial man can read the controversy and Concessions of 1797 without coming to this conclusion. The old preachers, immediately concerned in framing the Concessions, know it to be the fact, that all the pamphlets and resolutions, on the part of the people, insisted on this point, viz., the admission of lay delegates. And that the point was given up, only in consideration of "the great sacrifices in respect to authority" made by the Conference, "on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers," and of the district meetings in particular. We have not space for quotations from these pamphlets, but the notice contained in the Miscellaneous Regulations themselves, respecting delegates, is sufficient evidence that this point was urged.



temporal matters. But, if you will have it that the negative applies to discipline, some of those *other* matters related to the superintendent's authority, and not at all to districts. Was the superintendent's authority then reduced to a "bare negative?" We frankly admit, however, that a negative is reserved to districts in such matters as, by the established usage of Methodism, come ordinarily before the district. The declared object of these Concessions is to *reduce* the power both of superintendents and of district meetings; and it would surpass, we presume, even your ingenuity, to found on these Concessions an *extension* of their authority. There are matters of *finance* as well as of *discipline*, with which district meetings never pretended to have any concern; such are the accounts and matters *ordinarily* transacted at leaders' meeting and quarterly meetings: and there are similar matters with which district meetings are properly and Methodistically concerned; such are the accounts of deficiencies, &c., passed through them to the Conference; the calling out of young men to travel; and, in general, whatever is of direct and permanent interest beyond the precincts of the circuit. In all these matters, and even down to the erection of organs, or any other affair in which the consent of the Conference is required, we have never denied, but fully and freely admit, that the district meetings have a *negative*. We do not wish to impair the authority of district meetings, or to lower it beyond the point to which it was reduced in 1797; but we wish to keep to that point! It is, however, a waste of time and words to argue such a question with one who suppresses all his knowledge and experience of Methodism, in order to perplex and confound what to him must be perfectly plain, and who raises the point only that it may serve as a vehicle of personal abuse and misrepresentation!

XIX. The firm and decided steps taken by this circuit to maintain, within its own borders at least, the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797, you have thought proper to stigmatise as the setting up of Independency! To the unthinking and the ignorant, words, until explained, are sometimes terrible *bugbears*! We, however, are not children, to be frightened at so harmless a word. What, we pray you, do you mean by Independency? Dr. Coke, in 1794, declared that the Conference was the most perfect aristocracy existing, perhaps, upon earth! The doctor did not think this state of things was exactly as it ought to be; and our fathers, in 1795 and 1797, positively refused to submit to it. They felt that, even in Methodism, they had rights; and rights worth preserving to themselves and to their children. They, therefore, stood up in defence of those rights; and compelled the Conference to acknowledge them. Now, Methodism, under this change, did not become Independency; that is, its several circuits and societies did not become Independent churches; nor did they assume a popular form of church government, in the strict sense of the term. But she brake from off her neck the yoke of an absolute government; elevated her local presbyteries to a station and condition which should command respect; and acknowledged as vested in her local jurisdictions certain powers and prerogatives, in the exercise of which they became so far Independent, as that neither Conference nor district meeting can lawfully interfere to coerce or overrule them. These powers, rights, and privileges are set forth in the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797. So far as they go, we set up and maintain the Independency of this circuit. But we claim no further or other Independency. The general and undefined charge of Independency, which

you prefer, is evidently designed to raise a prejudice against us, as though we wished to burst asunder the bands of the Connexion; and it is, therefore, to be classed amongst those other slanderous insinuations, as unfounded as they are ungenerous, by which, in your extremity, you would misrepresent and discredit a righteous cause. Look at the Methodism of the London South Circuit for several years past; and tell us whether you are honest in representing us as "aiming at Independency?" In our Address to the Conference we declared that we were content and satisfied with the system thus established in this circuit. Does it differ in any material respect from the Methodism of every other circuit? We admit the right of the Conference to appoint preachers to all our chapels: is that Independency? We admit all the Methodistical rights of the superintendent, the same as in the other circuits; particularly his right to preside in all our local meetings; to nominate all our officers, subject to the election of the local authorities; and to regulate, according to usage, all our religious services: is all this Independency? We admit all the established rights and ordinary powers of the Conference and of district meetings: will Independency admit any of these things? In short, have we altered, or attempted to alter, anything relating to Methodism in this circuit. You know that we have not! You know that we oppose nothing, and object to nothing, except your novel and interested constructions of Methodistical law, your bold and unjustifiable reassumption of absolute power, and your newly invented counter-checks, by which you seek to undermine and destroy the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797.

Although it were impossible to expose all the sophistries and absurdities of your book; and notwithstanding our reluctance to enter into your speculative questions has induced us to pass over many of them; yet we are constrained to notice the strange inconsistencies and deceptive reasonings on which you have founded this charge of Independency. We therefore quote a few passages.

"The religious body to which we belong is a CONNEXION; that is, a number of societies who have agreed to unite themselves in a *common bond* of doctrine and discipline, under a *common code* of regulations and usages, and under a COMMON GOVERNMENT. Our societies are not INDEPENDENT churches."—Watson, p. 4.

Now, if, as regards the present controversy, this be not talking and saying nothing, it is something like it! Every government is *common* to those who live under it. By the common government, you evidently mean the supreme and *absolute* government of the Conference, of which you say, "As a Connexion we look up to it, as the *common* governing body, to which all are subject." This word *absolute* was not convenient; it was better to talk indefinitely about a *common* government! But the question is, whether the Conference be an *absolute* government? Whether it were so, or not, anterior to 1797, it has not been so since that period. Englishmen are not partial to absolute governments; and, therefore, it was against this pretended absolute government of the Conference, that our fathers rose up in 1795 and 1797. From that time to the present, the Conference has had no more to do with the ceded rights of the local presbyteries, than the king's ministers have to do with the chartered rights of the city of London. Thus, your first and main position is false, and all the reasoning you found on it falls to the ground!

On the fact of our being a Connexion, we cannot but admire how

your feather waves to the wind. In the resolutions of the last Conference we were loaded with abuse, for pretending to interfere with the affairs of another and a distant circuit, with which, it was said, we had NO CONCERN! And, at the close of your Address, you are again terribly afraid of our being a Connexion, and charge us with having "gone out of our own *local* jurisdiction." "You have," say you, "gone into the 'local jurisdiction' of the Leeds circuit, and into that of mine also!" Both these charges are wholly unfounded, but no matter; they illustrate your notion. Here is a CONNEXION, in which the parties *connected* have NO CONCERN with each other! No: not even to sympathize in each others' wrongs, and to assist one another in maintaining the "common bond of doctrine and discipline, and the common code of regulations and usages!" Being supreme and absolute, you are to exercise whatever powers, and effect whatever mischief you please, in any circuit; and all the other circuits, though connected in these common bonds, are to be altogether passive! *connected* indeed, but not *concerned*.

The truth is, that Mr. Wesley's societies were called a CONNEXION, because of their connexion with him, and not with one another. Thus they are described in all the Chapel Deeds, as "the Society of people called Methodists, late in connexion with the Rev. J. Wesley, deceased." Beyond the association of a few distinct societies in a circuit, they never had any connexion one with another, except through Mr. Wesley. Since his death, our CONNEXION has been with the Conference; and therefore, you are quite right in telling us, that as a circuit we have nothing to do, either with your circuit, or with Leeds. As individuals, as men, and free men, we talk, and write, and travel, when, where, and with whomsoever we please, without asking your leave; but as a Methodist circuit, we have not interfered with anything but what concerned us. Your President ordered certain inflammatory publications to be circulated in our circuit; and we addressed the Conference on the subject. The Conference, ruled by a faction, entrusted a man of unhappy temper to draw up certain resolutions on the subject; and he insulted, abused, and misrepresented us, in the name of the Conference! We, although compelled to charge the Conference *ostensibly* with violating the Constitution of 1797, yet, anxious to leave them a door of escape from this discreditable affair, directed our Resolutions, of the 23rd September last, chiefly against the real authors of the mischief. Then comes out the "Affectionate Address" of the Rev. Richard Watson; and who shall say, that so much *affection* did not demand a reply? Whether the Conference or your party can gain anything by this system of attack and reply, it is not for us to say; but there are who think, that you would be wiser to let us alone.

But you inquire, how the leading principle in our Address and Resolutions, "which is, that leaders' meetings, &c., are local jurisdictions, into which no district meeting or Conference has the power [right] to intrude, accords with our connexion with, and subjection to, the whole body?" Our answer is short and simple: The only Independence we claim, the only principle we lay down, is derived from the fundamental laws which form the basis of our union. This we have abundantly proved. But why do you mislead, by changing the terms of the argument? Why talk of our "connexion with, and subjection to, *the whole body*?" Was it ever pretended, that one circuit was in subjection to another, or to all the others put together?

Is it not clear, that you are contending, not for our subjection to the *whole body*, but to special district meetings and the Conference? Is it not equally clear, that, on every point, you are afraid to state your positions in plain English, and are fain to dress them in an illusory garb?

Having been thus charged with the design of introducing Independency, and abused as contending for popular rights, we perhaps owe it to ourselves and to the Connexion to declare, that for these matters, beyond the just principle laid down in the Plan of Pacification and the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797, we have no great inclination. Had our principles and feelings harmonised with systems more popular than that of Wesleyan Methodism, we presume that the doors of the Independent Churches are open to us; or we might have found ourselves at home in the New Connexion. We think, however, that it would be no advantage to Methodism, that every new convert, or awakened person, who may be just beginning to direct his attention to spiritual things, should be called to decide upon the important concerns of the church, which frequently demand the most serious deliberation of wisdom and experience. We think it sufficient, without closely examining the abstract right, that every such person should be at liberty to choose his own leader, from among those whom the local presbytery has appointed to that office; and that he has the means and opportunity, either through his leader or by direct communication (as we trust every individual in Methodism has), of bringing any and every question of importance before the leaders' meeting. Spiritual gifts, and even the qualifications necessary to serve the secular offices of the church, are not derived from the church, but from God. The church, however, must approve and judge of such gifts and qualifications. If any man is found to possess them, so long as Methodism continues what it has been, it will be his own fault if he have not the opportunity of exercising them. The church, perceiving the excellency of the power and the gift to be of God, will not be slow in appointing such a man to office. He will thus rise, by his talents and piety, to a station which ought to give him, and which, according to our view of the Methodist Constitution, does give him, a right to vote on every question affecting the interests of that society and circuit to which he belongs. We think it better, and are quite contented, that the local affairs of the circuits and societies should be managed by the local meetings, consisting of the men whom the church has selected and called to office; and in which the travelling preachers have certainly a full share of influence. But to oppose, in any cases, the right of such men to overrule their decisions as at Leeds, and to insult them with new tests and the surveillance of the district police, is not to oppose democracy, but to introduce despotism! It is not, therefore, for popular rights that we contend, but for the rights of the local meetings—of the official characters and acknowledged "Elders" of the church. The admission of your counter-checks would be a virtual overthrow of these local meetings. Will the respectable and influential men in Methodism submit to this? Let them say, whether they will not still prefer to manage their own affairs in their proper and lawful meetings, rather than submit to be dictated to and overruled by special district meetings and Conferences, in which we have neither voice nor influence, but in which your faction rides triumphant. Now if, after all, you and the men of your party are to stand up in our faces, and boldly assert that we want what we utterly disclaim—that we are seeking to introduce what we would rather exclude,

the public, as well as ourselves; may, perhaps, wonder at your assurance; but cannot mistake, either the character or the motives of such attempts. We strongly suspect that it has of late been an object with your party, and particularly that it was the design of the virulent attack made on us in the Magazine for May last, to provoke our friends of this circuit to some expression of feeling, or intemperate proceeding, which might give a handle against us at the next Conference. In this way, at the last Conference, you got over the Leeds business, and obtained the vote of thanks; not by answering the direct charges made against you, but by exaggerated statements of the irregular proceedings of the Leeds brethren. You thus alarmed the Conference with the cry of faction, which you had yourselves provoked; and took advantage of proceedings, of which you were the originating cause! Our friends in this circuit have been on their guard against this manœuvre. They have held no irregular meetings;—they have disturbed nothing in this circuit, and they intend to disturb nothing. They have simply replied to what has been published against them. The Conference and the Connexion are now warned of your misrepresentations. If the Conference choose again to be deceived, the public will have their eyes open. It will, therefore, be of little consequence what you may say, or what you may publish, against us. To all that you have yet put forth there are three main objections, which we shall beg leave to state:—

1. In no instance have you touched the main facts of the Leeds case, or attempted to answer the charges preferred against you, by a direct appeal to the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797. He that employs his pen in the present controversy, and omits these particulars, does but beat the air.

2. You nowhere admit, that the other circuits throughout the Connexion may justly apprehend, that what you did at Leeds, you might do elsewhere. You have been thanked by the Conference; and success and applause are the greatest stimulants to a repetition of that conduct by which they have been once obtained. When, therefore, you charge us with interfering, improperly, in the Leeds case, we allege in reply this just apprehension, lest the same outrages should be committed in this circuit; and, seeing the Conference was not to be looked to any longer for security and protection, we aimed to secure ourselves by our seventh resolution of the 23rd of September last.

3. In all your high claims to power and authority, you have abundantly shown that you do not understand the nature of those claims. The sources of power are two: law, sustained by the force of civil authority; and love. To the former, you can have no pretension. The latter alone was the foundation of all Mr. Wesley's power. Mr. Wesley, and the excellent men who laboured with him, were looked up to as men of God. The people felt and knew that they were disinterested. They wanted not *theirs*, but *them*. They were, therefore, beloved and obeyed. You confess, that you have lost, in a great measure at least, this power. If that be so, you are fallen indeed! any other kind of power you cannot have, and ought not to possess. You may argue and talk, you may misrepresent and abuse us; but no man ever obtained power over others by merely "chopping logic!" If you can give us twenty good reasons why we should submit to you, we can answer with twenty others, equally good, why you should submit to the church! In the meantime, and so long as this contention goes on, love cools, and, with it, your real power decreases.



Human nature is not to be reasoned into bondage, nor induced to love by mere persuasion!

We advise you and your party, therefore, if you must perpetuate the present controversy, to lay aside all your idle speculations about inherent rights and ministerial power, and all this system of invective and abuse; and to apply yourself to what you have hitherto so cautiously avoided,—the specific facts of the Leeds case, and their accordance with the express terms of the Plan of Pacification, and the Concessions of 1797. If this course be not convenient, then you had better acknowledge your errors, and satisfy the circuits that they shall no more be borne down by special district meetings.

In our Address to the Conference we showed, that the rules anterior to 1797, relating to district meetings, empowered them only in relation to travelling preachers; but, with or without a rule, some men will grasp at power and authority. Similar attempts had, therefore, been made prior to 1797, but our fathers boldly and firmly resisted them. Many of us are the children and descendants of those worthy and excellent men. Called upon to defend the same rights, and maintain the same liberties, we have trodden in their steps. Far from seizing any “new topic of factious declamation,” or “boldly assuming false premises, that we may hang upon them plausible and delusive arguments,” we have adopted the same principles, employed the same arguments, and drawn the same conclusions, and often in the very language of 1797. Our fathers were too wise, and had too much experience, not to know, that the best of human institutions have a tendency to decay; and that a new generation would arise, which would introduce new corruptions. They therefore carefully preserved the best pamphlets and publications of that day, and have handed them down to us, as heir-looms of family inheritance. We revere religion; we love Methodism; we abhor what we deem a perversion of both! Hence the ground of our opposition. We hope to prove ourselves worthy descendants of the men of 1795 and 1797, as far removed from faction, and from any disposition to trespass upon what you pompously term the *inherent* rights of others, as we are determined not to sacrifice the ceded rights of our local presbyteries, or to submit to the lordly domination of an aspiring faction in the priesthood!

We cannot admit that any individual has a right to engage a great circuit in a personal controversy. We have not, therefore, thought it becoming to introduce this reply to the quarterly meeting. We deem it quite sufficient, that those who have acted as a committee should subscribe their names, on behalf of themselves and others who cordially agree with them in sentiment.

(Signed)

JOSEPH ASHTON,  
J. H. BOWLER,  
WILLIAM DALE,  
EDWARD HEWITT,  
W. HIGGS,  
C. J. JONES,  
J. SCRASE LANGRIDGE,  
RICHARD SMITH,  
JAMES SPICER,  
JOHN TURNLEY,  
ELISHA WILSON,  
W. WRATHALL.

SOUTHWARK, July 1, 1829.



## POSTSCRIPT.

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You inform us that "nothing new in principle has been introduced." We conceive, that all the proceedings of the Leeds Special District Meeting were equally novel in principle as in fact and practice. We are perfectly aware that the Conference, on Mr. Wesley's death, professed to have derived from him the *absolute* government of the Methodist Connexion. On this subject, however, we shall beg leave to remark,

1. That Mr. Wesley's power never was absolute. It is a libel on his memory to pretend that he ever claimed such a lordship over God's inheritance. It is true, that neither Mr. Wesley's power, nor the rights of the societies, were clearly defined. It is true, that such was the love and veneration which the people had for that apostolic man, that he might do almost what he pleased in the societies. But you admit that he took counsel of the respective meetings. This counsel was his practice, as it was the practice of the Apostles; and, therefore, *from the beginning*, it was the practice of Methodism. Neither was it a mockery of consultation, as you would make it; but a truly Christian method of carrying on the affairs of the church. The right, as we have said, was not defined; but the practice was an admission of the right. Your assertion, that "Mr. Wesley, and the superintendents after him, although they took counsel of others, as wishing only to employ their power righteously, yet had the power, and often exercised it, to admit, expel, and remove from office, without any reference to such meetings at all," proves just nothing. Every superintendent does the same thing at this day. They were ordinary cases, on which no question arose, and which presented no occasion of general dissatisfaction, to call for inquiry. But where do you find, that Mr. Wesley ever refused an investigation, when deliberately called for by a leaders' meeting, in relation to the admission or expulsion of members or officers of the Society? or what evidence have you, that Mr. Wesley ever forced his societies into membership with persons whom a leaders' meeting declared unworthy to be received; or that he ever expelled members on any ground, save that of unquestionable (and, therefore, unquestioned by any leaders' meeting) immorality, or false doctrine? When, especially, did he ever divide a whole society upon any non-essential point? When did he expel a thousand members on any such question, and particularly on any question relating to an organ? Mr. Wesley's power was the power of love. On any other principle he could never have had any power at all, and would have found it as impossible to govern his societies as you will find it, if this coercive system be persisted in. The power for which you contend, is the very opposite of love. It is a power, as you tell us, to rule the church for its edification. The princes of the Gentiles make the same profession. They profess to rule for the public good,—the edification of their states. "Ye know, that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion, lordship,

authority over them, and are called *benefactors*. But so shall it not be among you."—Compare Matthew xx. 25, Mark x. 42, and Luke xxii. 25.

2. Notwithstanding the Conference, whilst agreed amongst themselves, were ready enough to declare that they had derived absolute power to rule the Connexion from Mr. Wesley, yet they were soon divided, and could not maintain the principle for a single year. In the very next Conference (1792) they were obliged to take up the question of the administration of the Lord's supper; and found, that their claim to absolute power, nay, even their power to administer that "Gospel ordinance," was so far from being admitted by the people, that after casting lots, the Conference resolved: "The Lord's supper shall not be administered by any person among our societies in England and Ireland, for the ensuing year, on any consideration whatsoever, except in London." And the prohibition extended even to the clergy of the church of England.

It was impossible to discuss this subject of the sacrament, without touching upon general rights, and questions of policy and power, as between the Conference and the people. These questions, once opened, were very fruitful ones. Accordingly, between 1792 and 1797, we find the Connexion literally deluged with publications, in which, so far from the favourite notion of absolute power being conceded to the Conference, the people were instructed in the true nature of their rights and liberties, according to the New Testament! and were called upon to assert and maintain these rights, in opposition to those trustees and preachers who opposed the introduction of the sacrament. Many of these pamphlets were written by the most esteemed and talented preachers in the Connexion, the companions and friends of Mr. Wesley. It was in this school, and on the call of those faithful guides, to whom our fathers gave heed in the great concerns of salvation, and not in the school of revolutionary France, as falsely insinuated, that our fathers learnt to assert their Christian liberty. It is true that the question assumed a practical form. It was of little consequence what Mr. Wesley's power had been. The point contended was, how far the Conference were entitled to rule the whole Connexion with an absolute sway; and whether the societies, like the primitive churches, ought not to have a participation in that government, to which their officers and members were called upon to submit. The arguments, as you are very well aware, were all on one side of the question. Reason, common sense, the Scriptures, and primitive practice, could never be enlisted on the side of despotic power either in church or state. When, therefore, Dr. Coke's declaration, that the Conference was "the most perfect aristocracy existing, perhaps, upon earth," was generally admitted in the disputes between 1792 and 1797, it applied rather to the corporate spirit of the Conference, and to their sturdy reluctance to frame any Code of Laws, in which the rights of the people should be acknowledged and secured, than to the actual existence of any such aristocratical power in practice, or to any admission of it in principle on the part of the people. This distinction was clearly pointed out in the best publications of that day, and, indeed, was too obvious to be overlooked. To have maintained such an aristocracy, the Conference must have had the aid of the civil power.

3. The existence of such an absolute and irresponsible authority, was felt and declared, in the controversy to which we have alluded, to

use the words of one of the writers of 1795, to be contrary, not only "to the oracles of God, but to the natural order of society." Despotic power, indeed, admits of but one distinction in human society, whether of church or state: viz., that of master and slave. It confounds all the gradations, and paralyses all the moral energies of mankind. It is degrading and debasing in principle; demoralizing and destructive in all its tendencies. It is equally so to him who wields such a deadly authority, and to those who, whether by tame submission or by the ascendancy of force, fall under the iron sceptre. Wherever it has prevailed, in the church especially, no order of men have been so corrupt as the higher clergy; none so degraded as the lower. Of its effects on the laity, the whole history of the Papacy, to which our fathers appealed in 1797, is a standing memorial.

4. We contrast this warning voice with the echo by the last Conference,\* of another voice from America, sounding forth the old Popish *jus divinum*; claiming for the ministry, *exclusively*, as of *divine right*, and without any authoritative control from the church itself, not merely the administration, but the sole right of expounding and maintaining, 1. *Gospel Doctrines*; that is, a right to preach and teach whatever they may please to admit into their creed as gospel doctrine: 2. *Ordinances*; that is, to set up whatever worship, sacraments, and services, they may deem conformable to the Gospel: and, 3. *Moral Discipline*; that is, to admit and expel, censure and suspend, to set up and put down, whomsoever they please in the church of God, and for whatever causes to them shall seem meet. Now here, we think, there is not only something, but a great deal, that is not only new in Methodism, but directly contrary to the Plan of Pacification; which gives to "every trustee, steward, and leader, in conjunction with the preachers of the district, a vote [not the courtesy of a mock consultation] in the trial of a preacher, in four grand particulars: "And if the majority of the meeting JUDGE that the accused preacher is *immoral, erroneous in doctrine, deficient in abilities*, or has *broken any of the rules* above mentioned, he shall be considered as removed from the circuit." This is Methodism; and when we contrast it with your new claim to be considered as the divinely authorised expounders of gospel doctrines, ordinances, and discipline; and hear you make it a matter of conscience not to admit any authoritative interference of the church, we cannot but exclaim, like Mr. Pawson, "Remember, O ye Methodists! that it was after the clergy had established these claims over the primitive church, that they introduced the doctrine of transubstantiation and saint worship, the ordinance of the mass, and the discipline of the Inquisition! In the name, therefore, of Him who bought you with his blood, maintain your rights and privileges." We shall only add here the words of Mr. Murlin, "the weeping prophet," in 1795, a man who excelled most men in holiness and love of souls: "I beseech you to abolish your ungodly decrees, and do not publish your serious considerations, neither in the yearly Minutes, nor in the large Minute-book; it may fix a disgrace upon the Methodists that are yet unborn. To the Methodist preachers in general, the Hundred in particular: my dear brethren, do not suffer yourselves to be bound neck and heels by the traditions of men [certain travelling preachers who had presumed to lay down fundamental principles], which make the commandment of God of none effect."

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\* See Minutes of Conference, 1823, Address to the American Conference.

The able reasoning contained in the preceding unanswered, and unanswerable, productions was lost upon the dominant party in the Wesleyan Conference, and the warnings of the author unheeded. Strong in their own fancied security, and flushed with the support of the wealthy few, they treated as a matter of little moment the disruption occasioned by the Leeds case, and, under the influence of their passion for power, proceeded, in 1835, during the agitation on Dr. Warren's affair, to a new and still more flagrant stretch of authority. Disregarding the remonstrances of the people, certain laws (so called) were enacted, said to be "declaratory" of previous laws, and professing to be for the interests of the Societies and to preserve the liberties of the people; but which, in reality, were intended, if we may judge from their composition and the action since taken upon them, were designed to confine all power to the priesthood, and make the people but the serfs and slaves of the Conference. These laws have been characterised as "steeped in apostacy and unbelief," and no more accurate description can be given of them, if we look at the deeds which have been perpetrated under their sanction. These Declaratory Resolutions of 1835 refer to three points: first, they assert the "undoubted right of the Conference, and of all its district committees, whether ordinary or special, to institute, in their official or collective character, any inquiry or investigation which they may deem expedient, into the moral, Christian, or ministerial conduct of the preachers under their care, *even although no formal or regular accusation may have been announced on the part of any individual*," and that "they have also the authority of coming to such decisions thereupon, as to them may seem most conformable to the laws of the New Testament, and to *the rules and usages of the Connexion*." This law, with its unjust and arbitrary provisions, affects the preachers directly, and the people in only a less direct manner, for a preacher cannot be removed from his position without the people being more or less concerned, as witness the removal (consequent on their expulsion on this infamous law) of the Rev. W. Griffith, jun., the refusal of the Rev. S. Dunn, and the Rev. James Everett; to say nothing of the state into which the Bath societies have been thrown by the recent suspension of the Rev. James Bromley. The second part of these laws refers to the "Expulsion of Members," the provisions of which are excessively harsh and unjust; greatly restrictive of the liberty of the people, reducing all the laity in the Connexion to such a state of ecclesiastical vassalage as is paralleled in no other section of the Church of Christ in this kingdom. The third part relates to "Meetings for Communication with the Conference by Memorial, on subjects of local concern, or on the General Laws of the Connexion." By this enactment, the Conference has declared itself inaccessible except during three days in each year, when it permits a special circuit meeting to be held, but so hedges it round with difficulties, that, in nine cases out of ten, no such meeting could be held. We refer the reader to an able exposition of this infamous enactment, entitled "An Examination of the Law of 1835." We have added this legislative monstrosity to the present edition of this work. It will be found at Appendix F.

# APPENDIX.

## APPENDIX A.

### THE REV. JOHN WESLEY'S DEED OF DECLARATION.

*An Attested Copy of Mr. Wesley's Declaration and Establishment of the Conference of the People called Methodists, enrolled in his Majesty's High Court of Chancery.*

To all to whom these Presents shall come, John Wesley, late of Lincoln College, Oxford, but now of the City Road, London, clerk, sendeth greeting :

WHEREAS divers buildings, commonly called chapels, with a messuage and dwelling-house or other appurtenances to each of the same belonging, situate in various parts of Great Britain, have been given and conveyed from time to time by the said John Wesley to certain persons and their heirs in each of the said gifts and conveyances named, which are enrolled in his Majesty's High Court of Chancery, upon the acknowledgment of the said John Wesley (pursuant to the act of Parliament in that case made and provided), upon trust that the trustees in the said several deeds respectively named, and the survivors of them, and their heirs and assigns, and the trustees for the time being to be elected as in the said deeds is appointed, should permit and suffer the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as he should for that purpose from time to time nominate and appoint, at all times during his life, at his will and pleasure, to have and enjoy the free use and benefit of the said premises, that he, the said John Wesley, and such person and persons as he should nominate and appoint, might therein preach and expound God's holy word : And upon further trust that the said respective trustees, and the survivors of them, and their heirs and assigns, and the trustees for the time being, should permit and suffer Charles Wesley, brother of the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as the said Charles Wesley should for that purpose from time to time nominate and appoint, in like manner during his life—To have, use, and enjoy the said premises respectively for the like purposes as aforesaid : and after the decease of the survivor of them, the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, then upon further trust, that the said respective trustees, and the survivors of them and their heirs and assigns, and the trustees for the time being for ever, should permit and suffer such person and persons, and for such time and times as should be appointed at the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists in London, Bristol, or Leeds, and no others, to have and enjoy the said premises for the purposes aforesaid : And whereas divers persons have in like manner given or conveyed many chapels, with messuages and dwelling-houses or other appurtenances to the same belonging, situate in various parts of Great Britain, and also Ireland, to certain trustees, in each of the said gifts and conveyances respectively named upon the like trusts, and for the same uses and purposes as aforesaid (except only that in some of the said gifts and conveyances, no life estate or other interest is therein or thereby given and reserved to the said Charles Wesley) : And whereas, for rendering effectual the trusts created by the said several gifts or conveyances, and that no doubt or litigation may arise with respect unto the same, or the interpretation and true meaning thereof, it has been thought expedient by the said John Wesley, on behalf of himself as donor of the several chapels, with the messuages, dwelling-houses, or appurtenances before mentioned, as of the donors of the said other chapels, with the messuages, dwelling-houses, or

appurtenances to the same belonging, given or conveyed to the like uses and trusts, to explain the words yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, contained in all the said trust deeds, and to declare what persons are members of the said Conference, and how the succession and indenture thereof is to be continued: *Now therefore these presents witness*, that for accomplishing the aforesaid purposes, the said John Wesley doth hereby declare, that the Conference of the people called Methodists, in London, Bristol, or Leeds, ever since there hath been any yearly Conference of the said people called Methodists in any of the said places, hath always heretofore consisted of the preachers and expounders of God's holy word, commonly called Methodists preachers, in connexion with and under the care of the said John Wesley, whom he hath thought expedient year after year to summons to meet him, in one or other of the said places of London, Bristol, or Leeds, to advise with them for the promotion of the Gospel of Christ, to appoint the said persons so summoned, and the other preachers and expounders of God's holy word, also in connexion with and under the care of the said John Wesley, not summoned to the said yearly Conference, to the use and enjoyment of the said chapels and premises so given and conveyed upon trust for the said John Wesley, and such other person and persons as he should appoint during his life as aforesaid, and for the expulsion of unworthy and admission of new persons under his care and into his connexion to be preachers and expounders as aforesaid, and also of other persons upon trial for the like purposes; the names of all which persons so summoned by the said John Wesley, the persons appointed, with the chapels and premises to which they were so appointed, together with the duration of such appointments, and of those expelled or admitted into connexion or upon trial, with all other matter transacted and done at the said yearly Conference, have year by year been printed and published under the title of Minutes of Conference. *And these presents further witness*, and the said John Wesley doth hereby avouch and further declare, that the several persons hereinafter named, to wit:—the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, of the City of London; John Allen, Bristol; Charles Almore, York; John Booth, Colchester; Jeremiah Brettel, Lynn; John Barber, Northampton; John Broadbent, Oxford; John Brettel, Gloucester; Samuel Bardsley, Macclesfield; Joseph Bradford, Leicester; Samuel Bradburn, Leeds; Isaac Brown, Birstall; Joseph Benson, Halifax; George Button, Isle of Man; Thomas Briscoe, Yarm; William Broothby, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Andrew Blair, Corke; George Brown, Clones; Thomas Barber, Charlemont; Thomas Coke, London; James Creighton, London; Thomas Cooper, Colchester; Joseph Cole, Oxford; Jonathan Cousins, Gloucester; Thomas Carlill, Grimsby; Thomas Corbitt, Gainsborough; Robert Costerdine, Colne; William Collins, Sunderland; John Crook, Lisburne; William Dufton, Halifax; Thomas Dixon, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; John Easton, Colne; John Fenwick, Burslem; Henry Foster, Belfast; William Green, Bristol; John Goodwin, Chester; Parson Greenwood, Liverpool; James Hall, Plymouth; William Hoskins, Cardiff; Joseph Harper, Grimsby; Thomas Hanby, Burslem; Thomas Hanson, Huddersfield; Lancelot Harrison, Scarborough; Robert Hopkins, York; Christopher Hopper, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; William Hunter, Berwick-upon-Tweed; Edward Jackson, Hull; Daniel Jackson, Dublin; Joshua Keighley, Seven Oaks; John Leech, Brecon; Thomas Longley, Derby; Robert Lindsay, Sligo; John Mason, Salisbury; John Moon, Plymouth Dock; John Murlin, Manchester; William Myles, Nottingham; Alexander Mather, Bradforth; Henry Moore, Cork; Duncan M'Allum, Aberdeen; Jonathan Parkin, Lynn; Joseph Pescod, Bedford; William Percival, Manchester; John Pawson, York; Christopher Peacock, Yarm; John Peacock, Barnard Castle; Nehemiah Price, Athlone; Richard Rodda, Birmingham; Thomas Rankin, London; James Rogers, Macclesfield; Jeremiah Robertshaw, Leicester; James Ray, Gainsborough; Robert Roberts, Leeds; Benjamin Rhodes, Keighley; Jasper Robinson, Isle of Man; Thomas Rutherford, Dublin; George Story, Salisbury; William Saunders, Brecon; William Simpson, Sheffield; Robert Scott, Lincoln; George Shadford, Hull; John Shaw, Huddersfield; Joseph Sanderson, Dundee; Thomas Tennant, London; James Thom, St. Austle; Joseph Taylor, Redruth; Thomas Taylor, Sheffield; William Thompson, Leeds; Barnabas Thomas, Hull; William Thom, Whitby; Zechariah Udall, Liverpool; Thomas Vasey, Liverpool; John Valton, Bristol; James Wood, Rochester; Richard Whateat, Norwich; Christopher Watkins, Northampton; Francis Wrigley, St. Austle; Duncan Wright, Chester; William Warrenner, Dundee; Richard Watkinson, Limerick, Gentlemen; being preachers and expounders of God's holy word, under the care and in connexion with the said John Wesley, have been, and now are, and do, on the day of the date hereof,



constitute the members of the said Conference, according to true intent and meaning of the said several gifts and conveyances, wherein the words Conference of the people called Methodists are mentioned and contained. And that the said several persons before named, and their successors for ever, to be chosen as hereinafter mentioned, are and shall for ever be construed, taken, and be the Conference of the people called Methodists. Nevertheless, upon the terms and subject to the regulations hereinafter prescribed: that is to say—

*First.* That the members of the said Conference, and their successors for the time being for ever, shall assemble once in every year, at London, Bristol, or Leeds (except as after mentioned), for the purposes aforesaid; and the time and place of holding every subsequent Conference shall be appointed at the preceding one, save that the next Conference after the date hereof shall be holden at Leeds in Yorkshire, the last Tuesday in July next.

*Second.* The act of the majority in number of the Conference, assembled as aforesaid, shall be had, taken, and be the act of the whole Conference, to all intents, purposes, and constructions whatsoever.

*Third.* That after the Conference shall be assembled as aforesaid, they shall first proceed to fill up all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence as after mentioned.

*Fourth.* No act of the Conference assembled as aforesaid, shall be had, taken, or be the act of the Conference, until forty of the members thereof are assembled, unless reduced under that number by death since the prior Conference or absence as after mentioned; nor until all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence shall be filled up by the election of new members of the Conference, so as to make up the number one hundred, unless there be not a sufficient number of persons objects of such election; and during the assembly of the Conference there shall always be forty members present at the doing of any act, save as aforesaid, or otherwise such act shall be void.

*Fifth.* The duration of the yearly assembly of the Conference shall not be less than five days, nor more than three weeks, and be concluded by the appointment of the Conference, if under twenty-one days; or otherwise the conclusion thereof shall follow of course at the end of the said twenty-one days; the whole of all which said time of the assembly of the Conference shall be had, taken, considered, and be the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, and all acts of the Conference during such yearly assembly thereof, shall be the acts of the Conference and none others.

*Sixth.* Immediately after all the vacancies, occasioned by death or absence, are filled up by the election of new members as aforesaid, the Conference shall choose a President and Secretary of their assembly out of themselves, who shall continue such until the election of another President or Secretary, in the next or other subsequent Conference; and the said President shall have the privilege and power of two members in all acts of the Conference during his presidency, and such other powers, privileges, and authorities, as the Conference shall from time to time see fit to entrust into his hands.

*Seventh.* Any member of the Conference absenting himself from the yearly assembly thereof, for two years successively, without the consent or dispensation of the Conference, and be not present on the first day of the third yearly assembly thereof at the time and place appointed for the holding of the same, shall cease to be a member of the Conference from and after the same said first day of the said third yearly assembly thereof, to all intents and purposes, as though he was naturally dead. But the Conference shall and may dispense with or consent to the absence of any member from any of the said yearly assemblies, for any cause which the Conference may see fit or necessary, and such member whose absence shall be so dispensed with, or consented to by the Conference, shall not by such absence cease to be a member thereof.

*Eighth.* The Conference shall and may expel and put out from being a member thereof, or from being in connexion therewith, or from being upon trial, any person member of the Conference, admitted into Connexion, or upon trial, for any cause which the Conference may see fit or necessary; and every member of the Conference so expelled and put out, shall cease to be a member thereof to all intents and purposes, as though he was naturally dead. And the Conference, immediately after the expulsion of any member thereof as aforesaid, shall elect another person to be a member of the Conference in the stead of such member so expelled.

*Ninth.* The Conference shall and may admit into connexion with them, or upon trial, any person or persons whom they shall approve, to be preachers and

expounders of God's holy word, under the care and direction of the Conference, the name of every such person or persons so admitted into connexion or upon trial as aforesaid, with the time and degrees of the admission, being entered in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference.

*Tenth.* No person shall be elected a member of the Conference who hath not been admitted in connexion with the Conference as a preacher and expounder of God's holy word, as aforesaid, for twelve months.

*Eleventh.* The Conference shall not nor may nominate or appoint any person to the use and enjoyment of, or to preach and expound God's holy word in, any of the chapels and premises so given or conveyed, or which may be given or conveyed, upon the trusts aforesaid, who is not either a member of the Conference, or admitted into connexion with the same, or upon trial as aforesaid; nor appoint any person for more than three years successively to the use and enjoyment of any chapels and premises already given, or to be given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, except ordained ministers of the Church of England.

*Twelfth.* That the Conference shall and may appoint the place of holding the yearly assembly thereof at any other city, town, or place than London, Bristol, or Leeds, when it shall seem expedient so to do.

*Thirteenth.* And for the convenience of the chapels and premises already or which may hereafter be given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, situate in Ireland or other parts out of the kingdom of Great Britain, the Conference shall and may, when and as often as it shall seem expedient, but not otherwise, appoint and delegate any member or members of the Conference with all or any of the powers, privileges, and advantages, hereinbefore contained or vested in the Conference; and all and every the acts, admissions, expulsions, and appointments whatsoever of such member or members of the Conference so appointed and delegated as aforesaid, the same being put into writing, and signed by such delegate or delegates, and entered in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference, and subscribed as after-mentioned, shall be deemed, taken, and be, the acts, admissions, expulsions, and appointments of the Conference, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever, from the respective times, when the same shall be done by such delegate or delegates; notwithstanding anything herein contained to the contrary.

*Fourteenth.* All resolutions and orders touching elections, admissions, expulsions, consents, dispensations, delegations, or appointments and acts whatsoever of the Conference, shall be entered and written in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference which shall be kept for that purpose, publicly read, and then subscribed by the President and Secretary thereof for the time being, during the time such Conference shall be assembled; and when so entered and subscribed, shall be had, taken, received, and be the acts of the Conference, and such entry and subscription as aforesaid shall be had, taken, received, and be evidence of all and every such acts of the said Conference and of their said delegates, without the aid of any other proof; and whatever shall not be so entered and subscribed as aforesaid, shall not be had, taken, received, or be the act of the Conference. And the said President and Secretary are hereby required and obliged to enter and subscribe as aforesaid every act whatever of the Conference.

*Lastly.* Whenever the said Conference shall be reduced under the number of forty members, and continue so reduced for three yearly assemblies thereof successively, or whenever the members thereof shall decline or neglect to meet together annually for the purposes aforesaid, during the space of three years, that then, and in either of the said events, the Conference of the people called Methodists shall be extinguished, and all the aforesaid powers, privileges, and advantages shall cease, and the said chapels and premises, and all other chapels and premises which now are, or hereafter may be, settled, given, or conveyed, upon the trusts aforesaid, shall vest in the trustees for the time being of the said chapels and premises respectively, and their successors for ever: UPON TRUST that they, and the survivors of them, and the trustees for the time being, do, shall, and may appoint such person and persons to preach and expound God's holy word therein, and to have the use and enjoyment thereof, for some time and in such manner as to them shall seem proper.

Provided always that nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to extinguish, lessen, or abridge the life-estate of the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, or either of them, of and in any of the said chapels and premises, or any other chapels and premises, wherein they, the said John Wesley and Charles Wesley, or either of them, now have or may have any estate or interest, power or authority, whatsoever. In witness whereof, the said John Wesley hath hereunto set his hand and seal, the twenty-eighth day of February, in the twenty-fourth year

of the reign of our Sovereign Lord, George the Third, by the grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth, and in the year of our Lord one thousand, seven hundred, and eighty-four.

JOHN WESLEY.

Sealed and delivered (being first duly stamped) in the presence of—

WILLIAM CLULOW, Quality Court, Chancery Lane, London.

RICHARD YOUNG, Clerk to the said William Clulow.

The above is a true copy of the original Deed (which is enrolled in Chancery), and was therefore examined by us—

WILLIAM CLULOW.

RICHARD YOUNG.

## APPENDIX B.

### ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT FOR GENERAL PACIFICATION, 1795.

#### I. CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER, BAPTISM, &c.

1. The sacrament of the Lord's supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except the majority of the trustees of that chapel, on the one hand, and the majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people), on the other hand, allow of it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of the Conference shall be first obtained, before the Lord's supper be administered.

2. Wherever there is a society, but no chapel, if the majority of the stewards and leaders of that society testify that it is the wish of the people that the Lord's supper should be administered to them, their desire shall be granted; provided that the consent of the Conference be first obtained.

3. Provided, nevertheless, that in Mount Pleasant Chapel, at Liverpool, and in all other chapels where the Lord's supper has been already peaceably administered, the administration of it shall be continued in future.

4. The administration of baptism, the burial of the dead, and service in church hours, shall be determined according to the regulations above mentioned.

5. Wherever the Lord's supper shall be administered according to the before-mentioned regulations, it shall always be continued, except the Conference order the contrary.

6. The Lord's supper shall be administered by those only who are authorised by the Conference; and at such times, and in such manner only, as the Conference shall appoint.

7. The administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, according to the above regulations, is intended only for the members of our own society.

8. We agree that the Lord's supper be administered among us on Sunday evenings only, except where the majority of the stewards and leaders desire it in church hours; or where it has already been administered in those hours. Nevertheless, it shall never be administered on those Sundays on which it is administered in the parish church.

9. The Lord's supper shall always be administered, in England, according to the form of the Established Church; but the person who administers shall have liberty to give out hymns, and to use exhortation and extemporary prayer.

10. Wherever Divine service is performed in England on the Lord's-day, in church hours, the officiating preacher shall read either the service of the Established Church, our venerable father's abridgment, or, at least, the lessons appointed by the calendar. But we recommend either the full service or the abridgment.

#### II. CONCERNING DISCIPLINE.

1. The appointment of preachers shall remain solely with the Conference, and no trustee, or number of trustees, shall expel or exclude from their chapel or chapels any preacher so appointed.

2. Nevertheless, if the majority of the trustees, or the majority of the stewards and leaders of any society, believe that any preacher appointed for their circuit is immoral, erroneous in doctrine, deficient in abilities, or that he has broken any of the rules above-mentioned, they shall have authority to summon the preachers of the district, and all the trustees, stewards, and leaders of that circuit, to meet in their chapel, on a day and hour appointed (sufficient time being given). The

chairman of the district shall be president of the assembly; and every preacher, trustee, steward, and leader, shall have a single vote, the chairman possessing the casting voice. And if the majority of the meeting judge that the accused preacher is immoral, erroneous in doctrine, deficient in abilities, or has broken any of the rules above-mentioned, he shall be considered as removed from that circuit; and the district committee shall, as soon as possible, appoint another preacher for that circuit, instead of the preacher so removed; and shall determine among themselves how the removed preacher shall be disposed of till the Conference, and shall have authority to suspend the said preacher from all public duties till the Conference, if they judge proper. The district committee shall also supply, as well as possible, the place of the removed preacher, till another preacher be appointed; and the preacher thus appointed, and all other preachers, shall be subject to the above mode of trial. And if the district committee do not appoint a preacher for that circuit, instead of the removed preacher, within a month after the aforesaid removal, or do not fill up the place of the removed preacher till another preacher be appointed, the majority of the said trustees, stewards, and leaders, being again regularly summoned, shall appoint a preacher for the said circuit, provided he be a member of the Methodist Connexion, till the next Conference.

3. If any preacher refuse to submit to the above mode of trial, in any of the cases mentioned above, he shall be considered as suspended till the next Conference. And if any trustees expel from any chapel a preacher, by their own *separate* authority, the preachers appointed for that circuit shall not preach in that chapel till the next Conference, or till a trial take place, according to the mode mentioned above.

4. If any trustees expel or exclude a preacher, by their own *separate* authority, from any chapel in any circuit, the chairman of the district shall summon the members of the district committee, the trustees of that circuit who have not offended, and the stewards and leaders of the circuit. And the members of such assembly shall examine into the evidence on both sides; and if the majority of them determine, that the state of the society, in which the exclusion took place, requires that a new chapel should be built previous to the meeting of the Conference, every proper step shall be immediately taken for erecting such chapel. And no step shall on any account be taken, to erect a chapel for such purpose, before the meeting of the Conference, till such meeting be summoned, and such determination be made.

5. No preacher shall be suspended or removed from his circuit by any district committee, except he have the privilege of the trial before-mentioned.

6. The Hundred preachers, mentioned in the enrolled Deed, and their successors, are the only legal persons who constitute the Conference; and we think the junior brethren have no reason to object to this proposition, as they are regularly elected according to seniority.

7. Inasmuch as, in drawing up the preceding regulations, we have laboured to restore and preserve the peace and unity of the society, and, in order thereto, have endeavoured to keep the preachers out of all disputes on the subjects therein specified: Be it understood, that any preacher who shall disturb the peace of the society, by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's supper in our societies, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, shall be subject to the trial and penalties before-mentioned.

8. And in order that the utmost impartiality may be manifest in these regulations, for the peace of the whole body, we also resolve, that if any local preacher, trustee, steward, or leader, shall disturb the peace of the society, by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's supper, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, the superintendent of the circuit, or the majority of the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the society so disturbed, shall have authority to summon a meeting of the travelling preachers of the circuit, and the trustees, stewards, and leaders of that society. Evidence shall be examined on both sides; and if the charge be proved, the superintendent preacher shall expel from the society the person so offending.

#### ADDENDA.

1. The Conference by no means wishes to divide any society, by the introduction of the Lord's supper, and therefore, except that a majority of the stewards and leaders, who desire the Lord's supper among themselves, testify in writing to the Conference, that they are persuaded that no separation will be made thereby, they will not allow it.

2. The sacrament shall not be administered to a society in any private house, within two miles of the Methodist chapel in which it is regularly administered.

3. We all agree, that the pulpit shall not be a vehicle of abuse.

4. It has been our general custom, never to appoint or remove a steward or leader, without first consulting the stewards and leaders of that society; and we are resolved to walk by the same rule.

5. To prevent, as much as possible, the progress of strife and debate, and consequent divisions in our Connexion, no pamphlet or printed letter shall be circulated among us without the author's name, and the postage or carriage paid.

6. Nothing contained in these Rules shall be construed to violate the rights of the trustees, as expressed in their respective deeds.

MANCHESTER, August 6, 1795.

### APPENDIX C.

#### PRINTED CIRCULAR OF THE CONFERENCE, CONTAINING THE CONCESSIONS OF 1797.

##### TO THE METHODIST SOCIETIES.

DEAR BRETHREN,—We think it our duty to inform you, by the earliest opportunity, of the measures we have taken, in order to satisfy those of our brethren who have been made more or less uneasy by sundry publications circulated through the societies; and, we trust, that on a serious consideration of the regulations we have agreed to at this Conference, you will see that the sacrifices in respect to authority, which we have made on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers, evidence our willingness to meet our brethren in everything which is consistent with the existence of the Methodist discipline, and our readiness to be their servants for Jesus' sake.

##### I. In respect to finances or money-matters:

1. We have determined to publish annually a very minute account of the disbursement, or application, of the Yearly Collection; and

2. A full account of the affairs of Kingswood School.

3. That all bills for the support of travelling preachers and their families, in respect to deficiencies, house-rent, fire, candles, sickness, travelling expenses, and all other matters of a temporal kind for their support, for which the circuits cannot provide, shall first meet with the approbation of the quarterly meeting, and be signed by the general steward of the circuit, before they can be brought to the district committee.

##### II. In respect to all other temporal matters:

1. It has been determined, that no circuits shall be divided till such division has been approved of by their respective quarterly meetings, and signed by the general stewards.

2. That no other temporal matter shall be transacted by the district committees, till the approbation of the respective quarterly meeting be first given, signed by the circuit stewards.

##### III. In respect to the receiving and excluding private members of the Society:

1. The leaders' meeting shall have a right to declare any person on trial, improper to be received into the Society; and, after such declaration, the superintendent shall not admit such person into the Society.

2. No person shall be expelled from the Society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a leaders' meeting.

IV. In respect to the appointment and removal of leaders, stewards, and local preachers, and concerning meetings:\*

\* This general title relates to the *removal* of local preachers as well as to their *appointment*; but no regulation follows relative to their removal. Mr. Beecham is careful to notice this omission, page 49, but from what motive he does not explain. The rule, in connexion with its title, secures the principle; and the practice has hitherto been conformable to the principle. According to both principle and practice, as a local preacher can be admitted only by the consent of his brethren, so he cannot be removed without such consent. If this matter be questioned, we may have more to say upon it. Under the *fifth* general summary, we notice a synonyme to the same purpose, which makes the clause ridiculous, unless it be taken for a clerical error in writing, "*appointed*" instead of "*removed*."



1. No person shall be appointed a leader or steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the leaders' meeting: the nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation to be in the leaders' meeting.

2. The former rule concerning local preachers is confirmed, viz., That no person shall receive a plan as a local preacher, without the approbation of a local preachers' meeting.

3. In compliance with a request made by the committee of persons from various parts, namely, "That the Conference be requested to re-consider and revise those rules which relate to the calling of meetings, and appointing local preachers, made last year," we say, "No local preacher shall be permitted to preach in any other circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of the circuit in which he lives; nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, but from men in office, who act in conjunction with the superintendent of that circuit which he visits." The design of this rule is to prevent any, under the character of local preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money, or by living upon them; and to prevent improper persons, who bear no part of the expense, from inviting local preachers thus to visit them. But it never was intended to reflect the least disrespect on any of our worthy brethren, the local preachers, whom, considered as a body, we greatly respect. And it should not be lost sight of, that several of the most respectable local preachers in the kingdom, who were in the committee which met the committee of preachers appointed by the Conference, declared their high approbation of the rule, and desired that it might be strengthened as much as possible, as none could justly complain of it.

4. As the committee above-mentioned requested also, that the Minutes of the last Conference, concerning the calling of meetings to consider of the affairs of the Society or Connexion, be explained; and as we are exceedingly desirous of preserving the peace and union of the whole body, we have agreed upon the following explanation: viz.—

(1.) As the leaders' meeting is the proper meeting for the society, and the quarterly meeting for the circuit, we think that other formal meetings, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences: But,

(2.) In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our societies, we allow, that other formal meetings may be held, if they receive the approbation of the superintendent and the leaders' or quarterly meeting; provided also that the superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting.

V. We have selected all our ancient rules, which were made before the death of our late venerable Father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which are essential rules, or prudential at this present time; and have solemnly signed them, declaring our approbation of them, and determination to comply with them; one single preacher excepted,\* who, in consequence, withdrew from us.

VI. We have determined, that *all the rules* which relate to the societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and quarterly meetings, *shall be published with the Rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members.*

VII. In respect to all new rules which shall be made by the Conference:

It is determined, that if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the societies at large, and such rule shall be objected to, at the first quarterly meeting in any circuit; and if the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, be of opinion, that the enforcing of such rule in that circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that circuit, it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of such quarterly meeting before the second Conference. But if the rule be confirmed by the Conference, it shall be binding to the whole Connexion. Nevertheless, the quarterly meetings, rejecting a new rule, shall not, by publications, public meetings, or otherwise make that rule a cause of contention; but shall strive, by every means, to preserve the peace of the Connexion.

Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands, as represented in your different public meetings.

1. We have delivered the whole of our yearly collection to your management. For we know by experience that the bills of the quarterly meetings, if only mere justice be done to the preachers and their families, will amount to much more than the yearly collection. The Conference will, in this business, have no authority

\* Before the Conference concluded, two other preachers withdrew.



whatsoever; they will have nothing but the trouble of receiving the money and paying the bills which shall have been sent to them from the quarterly meetings, and been approved of by the district committees. And when the accounts are published by the Conference, every quarterly meeting may compare its own accounts with those of the Conference, and thereby have as complete a check as the nature of things can possibly admit of.

The Conference has reserved to itself the management of its own book concerns. This is most reasonable, as the institution was established for the carrying on of the work of God, under the direction of Mr. Wesley and the Conference,—was continued, by the deed or codicil of Mr. Wesley's will, for the use of the Conference,—as the whole burden of the management of the business lies upon the Conference, and the servants they employ, and on the superintendents of circuits,—and also, as it is the only fund which can supply any deficiencies of the yearly collections, as the accounts published in our Minutes for several years past clearly evidence, the yearly collection having not been nearly sufficient for the wants of the preachers and families, and for the carrying on of the work of God in general.

2. The whole management of our temporal concerns may now be truly said to be invested in the quarterly meetings, the district meetings having nothing left them but a negative.

3. Our societies have a full check on the superintendent, by the means of their leaders' meetings, in regard to the introduction of persons into society; whilst the superintendent has sufficient scope allowed him for the increase of the societies, not only according to the common course of things, but at the times of remarkable outpourings of the Spirit of God.

4. The members of our societies are delivered from every apprehension of clandestine expulsions; as that superintendent would be bold indeed who would act with partiality or injustice in the presence of the whole meeting of leaders. Such a superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and if such there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren.

5. There is now no society-officer among us, who can be received without the content of that meeting to which he particularly belongs, nor can any officer be appointed [*query, removed?*], except upon the same plan.

6. In order to prevent any degree of precipitation in making new rules, and to obtain information of the sentiments of our people on every such rule, we have agreed to the article mentioned under the 7th head, by which no regulations will be finally confirmed till after a year's consideration, and the knowledge of the sentiments of the Connexion at large, through the medium of all their public officers.

In short, brethren, out of our great love for peace and union, and our great desire to satisfy your minds, we have given up to you by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority: and, if we consider that the quarterly meetings are the sources from whence all temporal regulations, during the intervals of Conference, must now originally spring; and also, that the committee, formed according to the Plan of Pacification, can, in every instance in which the trustees, leaders, and stewards choose to interfere respecting the gifts, doctrines, or moral character of preachers, supersede, in a great measure, the regular district committees; we may, taking all these things into our view, truly say, that such have been the sacrifices we have made, that our district committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining, but a bare negative in general, and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draught of the stations of the preachers. And besides all this, we have given the quarterly meetings opportunities of considering every new law, of suspending the execution of it for a year in their respective circuits, and of sending their sentiments on it to the Conference, before it be finally confirmed.

We have represented these measures, which we have taken for your satisfaction, in as concise a manner as we well could, giving you the sense of the whole, not only for brevity's sake, but for expedition, that you may be informed of the general heads of our proceedings as soon as possible. In the *Regulations*, which will be published with the *Rules of the Society*, as mentioned above, you will have the whole at large. We are, your affectionate brethren,

Signed, in behalf and by order of the Conference,

THOMAS COKE, PRESIDENT.

SAMUEL BRADBURN, SECRETARY.

LEEDS, August 7, 1797.

## APPENDIX D.

## THE COLLECTION OF RULES OR CODE OF LAWS.

PUBLISHED BY THE CONFERENCE OF 1797, IN EXECUTION OF ARTICLE VI. OF THE ABOVE CIRCULAR.

[To the first and every succeeding edition of this Collection of Rules, Article vi. of the preceding Circular is prefixed; and it is expressly stated, in an introductory note, to be published "*in execution* of the above-mentioned determination" of the Conference. Notwithstanding all this, however, Mr. Beecham throws this publication on one side, and substitutes for it the Miscellaneous Regulations!! It was necessary to do this, or to give up his main hypothesis; for this publication, which was to contain "*the whole at large*," does not contain the *Miscellaneous Regulations*;—a clear proof that those Regulations had no reference to the people, but referred to the preachers, as the only parties amenable to the district meeting. (See the note, p. 59.) Myles, Crowther, Dr. Warren, and every other writer on the constitution, give the following Code of Laws as the one referred to by the printed Circular of the 7th August, 1797.\* The following is from an early copy.]

## RULES RELATING TO THE SOCIETY.

## I. OF RECEIVING MEMBERS INTO THE SOCIETY.

1. The leaders' meeting has a right to declare any person on trial improper to be received into the society; and, after such declaration, the superintendent shall not admit such person into society.
2. Neither the superintendents, nor any other preachers, shall give tickets to any, until they are recommended by a leader, with whom they have met at least two months on trial.
3. No preacher shall give notes (admitting persons on trial) to any but those who are recommended by one he knows, or until they have met three or four times in a class.
4. He must give them the Rules of the Society the first time they meet.
5. As some of our people have, in different parts of the kingdom, been imposed on, in various ways, by swindlers, who professed themselves members of our society, let no person be received into any society, without a certificate, signed by one of the itinerant preachers in the circuit from whence he professes to have come. 1779.

## II. OF THE EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS FROM THE SOCIETY.

1. The far greater number of those that are separated from us, exclude themselves by neglecting to meet in class and use the other means of grace, and so gradually forsake us. With regard to the others,
2. Our rule is fixed, and our custom expressed in the preceding Rules of Society, where it is said, "If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them—we will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season: But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us."
3. No person must be expelled from the society for any breach of our rules, or even for manifest immorality, till such fact or crime has been proved at a leaders' meeting.

## III. OF PERMITTING STRANGERS TO BE PRESENT AT THE SOCIETY MEETINGS AND LOVE-FEASTS.

1. Let every other meeting of the society be for the members of the society only; and let no stranger be admitted. At other times some may be permitted to be present; but the same persons not above three times.
2. Let all the members of the society show their tickets; and if the stewards and leaders are not exact, others must be employed that have more resolution.
3. Let no person attend any love-feast, without a note from the preacher.
4. Let no love-feast be appointed but by the consent of the superintendent; nor any funeral sermon be preached, without his consent, and for those only who die happy in the Lord.

## IV. OF SERVICE IN CHURCH HOURS.

The cases in which it has been agreed to allow service in what are commonly called church hours, are,

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\* See Dr. Warren's Digest, vol. i. p. 265.

1. When the church minister, rector, vicar, or curate, is a notoriously wicked man.
2. When he preaches Arian, Socinian, or any other equally pernicious doctrine.
3. When there are not churches in the town or parish sufficient to contain the people.
4. Where there is no church within two or three miles.
5. When a majority of the trustees of any chapel, on the one hand, and of the stewards and leaders of the society belonging to that chapel, on the other, allow of and request it; and as to places where there is a society, and no chapel, wherever the majority of the stewards and leaders of that society testify that it is the wish of the people, and that it will cause no division among them.
6. Wherever Divine service is performed in England on the Lord's-day, in church hours, the officiating preacher shall read either the Service of the Church, our venerable Father's Abridgment of it; or, at least, the Lessons appointed by the calendar. But we recommend either the full Service or the Abridgment.

#### V. CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER IN OUR SOCIETIES.

1. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except a majority of the trustees of that chapel, on the one hand, and a majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to that chapel, as the best qualified to give the sense of the people, on the other, allow it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of Conference shall be first obtained before this ordinance shall be administered.
2. Where there is a society, but no chapel, if the majority of the stewards and leaders of that society testify, in writing, to the Conference, that it is the wish of the people that the Lord's Supper should be administered among them, and that no separation will be made thereby, their desire shall be granted.
3. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered to a society in a private house, within two miles of a Methodist chapel.
4. The Lord's Supper shall be administered by the superintendent only, or such of his helpers as are in full connexion, and as he shall appoint; provided, that no preacher be required to give it against his own inclination; and should it be granted to any place where the preachers on the circuit are all unwilling to give it, the superintendent shall, in that case, invite a neighbouring preacher, who is properly qualified, to give it.
5. It shall be administered at such times and in such manner as the Conference shall appoint. And the Conference agreed that the Lord's Supper shall be administered among us on Sunday evenings only; except the majority of the stewards and leaders desire it in church hours; or where it has already been administered in those hours. Nevertheless, it shall never be administered on those Sundays on which it is administered in the parish church.
6. The Lord's Supper shall always be administered in England according to the form of the Established Church; but the person who administers shall have liberty to give out hymns, to use exhortation, and extemporary prayer.
7. Wherever the Lord's Supper shall be administered according to the above-mentioned regulations, it shall always be continued, except the Conference order otherwise.
8. No person shall be suffered, on any pretence, to partake of the Lord's Supper among us, unless he be a member of society, or receive a note of admission from the superintendent (or the preacher administering), which note must be renewed quarterly. And if any leaders, stewards, or trustees, refuse to be regulated by this rule, the Sacrament shall not be administered where this is the case.
9. The administration of baptism and the burial of the dead, shall be determined according to the regulations above-mentioned, respecting the Lord's Supper.

#### VI. ON CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD AND SABBATH-BREAKING.

1. Those schoolmasters and schoolmistresses who receive dancing-masters into their schools, and those parents who employ dancing-masters for their children, shall be no longer members of our society.
2. To prevent or remedy the evils of dram-drinking, evil-speaking, unprofitable conversation, lightness, expensiveness or gaiety of apparel, and contracting debts without due care to discharge them, or smuggling, buying, or selling uncustomed goods, the preacher shall solemnly and frequently warn the societies against these

evils, and inform them, that they who are guilty of them, cannot be permitted to remain with us.

3. We strongly recommend to all the members of our societies the religious observation of the Lord's-day, and desire our superintendents to exclude from the society all who buy or sell on that sacred day, except in case of medicine for the sick, or for supplying necessities for funerals.

4. No member of our society must employ any barber on the Lord's-day. And all our people who possibly can, are desired to employ only those barbers who conscientiously abstain from Sabbath-breaking.

5. No member of our society must make any wake or feast, or go to any on the Lord's-day, but bear a public testimony against them.

#### VII. OF MARRYING WITH UNBELIEVERS.

Some of our members have married with unbelievers, yea, with unawakened persons. This has had fatal effects. They have had either a cross for life, or turned back unto perdition. To put a stop to this, every preacher is enjoined to enforce frequently the Apostle's caution, "Be not unequally yoked." And he is openly to declare, that whoever does this shall be expelled from the society. When any such are expelled, he is to subjoin a suitable exhortation, and to urge all single persons to take no step in so weighty a matter, without advising with the most serious of their Christian friends.

#### VIII. OF BANKRUPTCIES.

To prevent scandal, when any of our members become bankrupts, the superintendent shall talk with them at large. And if any of them have not kept fair accounts, or have been concerned in the base practice of raising money by coining notes, commonly called the bill trade, he shall be expelled immediately.

#### IX. OF LOYALTY AND SUBJECTION TO THE KING AND GOVERNMENT.

None of us shall, either in writing or conversation, speak lightly or irreverently of the Government under which he lives. We are to observe, that the Oracles of God command us to be subject to the higher powers; and that "honour to the king" is there connected with the "fear of God." 1792.

#### X. OF DAYS OF FASTING.

A general Fast shall be held in all our societies the first Friday after New Year's-day; after Lady-day; after Midsummer-day; and after Michalmas-day.

### RULES RELATING TO THE OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETIES.

#### I. OF THE APPOINTMENT OR CHANGE OF STEWARDS AND LEADERS.

1. No person shall be appointed a leader or society-steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with a leaders' meeting; the nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the leaders' meeting.

2. As several inconveniences have arisen respecting the change of stewards; to remedy this, let it be observed, that the office of a steward ceases at the end of the year; and every superintendent is required to change one steward at least; so that no steward may be in office above two years together, except in some extraordinary cases.

3. The proper time for changing the circuit-stewards is at the quarterly meeting, when the superintendent shall consult all who are present respecting the most proper person or persons to act in that capacity.

4. The place for appointing or changing the steward of any particular society, is the leaders' meeting of that society. For in the general, "No person can be received as a society-officer among us, without the consent of that meeting to which he particularly belongs; nor can any officer be appointed [*Query*, removed?], except on the same plan."—Minutes of 1797.

#### II. OF THE LOCAL PREACHERS AND THEIR MEETINGS.

1. The superintendent shall regularly meet the local preachers once a-quarter; and no person shall receive a plan as a local preacher, nor be suffered to preach among us as such, without the approbation of that meeting. Or if in any circuit a regular local preachers' meeting cannot be held, they shall be proposed and approved at the general quarterly meeting of the circuit. 1794.

2. All local preachers shall meet in class. No exception shall be made in respect to any who have been travelling preachers in former years. 1793.

3. Let no local preacher, who will not meet in class, or who is not regularly planned by the superintendent of the circuit where he resides, be permitted to preach.

4. Let no local preacher be permitted to preach in any other circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of that circuit in which he lives; nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, except from men in office, who act in conjunction with the superintendent of that circuit which he visits. N.B. The design of this rule is to prevent any, under the character of local preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money or living upon them, and to prevent improper persons, who bear no part of the expense, from inviting local preachers thus to visit them. But it was never intended to reflect the least disrespect on any of our worthy brethren, the local preachers, whom, as a body, we greatly respect.

5. Let no local preacher keep love feasts, without the consent of the superintendent, nor in any wise interfere with his business. Let every one keep in his own place, and attend to the duties of his station.

6. No preacher who has been suspended or expelled shall, on any account, be employed as a local preacher, without the authority of Conference.

### III. CONCERNING TRUSTEES.

1. The trustees, in conjunction with the superintendent, who shall have one vote only, shall choose their own stewards; who shall receive and disburse all seat-rents, and such collections as shall be made for the purpose of paying interest of money due upon the premises, or for reducing the principal. The aforesaid steward shall keep proper accounts in books provided for that purpose; which books shall be open for the inspection of the superintendent, and audited in his presence once every year; or oftener, if convenient.

2. No trustee, however accused, or defective in conformity to the established Rules of the Society, shall be removed from the society, unless his crime or breach of the Rules of the Society be proved in the presence of the trustees and leaders 1794.

### IV. OF THE QUARTERLY MEETINGS, COMPOSED OF THE STEWARDS OF THE DIFFERENT SOCIETIES IN EACH CIRCUIT.

1. All bills for the support of travelling preachers and their families; for house-rent, fire, candles, sickness, travelling expenses, and all other matters, for which the circuits cannot provide, shall first meet with the approbation of the quarterly meetings, and be signed by the general steward of the circuit, before they can be brought to the district committee.

2. No circuits shall be divided until such division has been approved by the respective quarterly meetings, and signed by the general steward.

3. Before any superintendent propose a preacher to the Conference as proper to be admitted on trial, such preacher must be approved of at the March quarterly meeting. 1797.

## APPENDIX E.

[We have printed the following Miscellaneous Regulations, in order that the reader may have them to compare with the foregoing Code of Laws. These Regulations were published by the Conference of 1797, as already observed, in what is denominated the "LARGE MINUTES;" *that publication* being a continuation of the "Large Minutes" published by Mr. Wesley for the government of the preachers. It is, therefore, clear, from their not being incorporated in the Code of Laws relative to the PEOPLE, but being embodied with the Large Minutes for the government of the PREACHERS, that they relate *solely* to the discipline of the latter.]

### SUNDRY MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS.

#### I. WITH RESPECT TO DISTRICTS.

1. In order to render our districts more effective, the President of the Conference shall have power, when applied to, to supply a circuit with preachers, if any should die or desist from travelling; and to sanction any change of preachers which it may

be necessary to make in the intervals of the Conference. And to assist at any district meeting, if applied to for that purpose, by the chairman of the district, or by a majority of the superintendents in each district. And he shall have a right, if written to by any who are concerned, to visit any circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with respect to Methodism, and, in union with the district committee, redress any grievance.

2. The chairman of each district, in conjunction with his brethren of the committee, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of the laws, as far as his district is concerned.

3. That no chairman may have cause to complain of the want of power, in cases which (according to his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary district meeting, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest superintendents, to be incorporated with the district committee, who shall have equal authority to vote and settle everything till the Conference.

4. The Conference recommends it to the superintendents of the circuits, to invite, on all important occasions, the chairman of their respective districts to be present at their quarterly meetings.\*

5. The chairman of every district shall be chosen by the ballot of the Conference, after the names of all the preachers in the district have been read to them by the Secretary.

## APPENDIX F.

### THE SPECIAL ADDRESS OF THE CONFERENCE OF 1835 TO THE WESLEYAN METHODIST SOCIETIES IN GREAT BRITAIN.

[WE have reprinted these so-called Laws of 1835, from the minutes of that year (pp. 144-70), that the reader may have an opportunity of examining these celebrated productions, and comparing and contrasting them with the previous legislation of the Conference; and also see the extensive departure of the Conference of that year from the principles they had solemnly pledged themselves to abide by.—ED.]

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,—In the conclusion of a communication dated “Wesleyan Conference, Sheffield, August 7th, 1835,” and which has already been largely circulated among you, it was intimated that further information, on the subjects to which that communication referred, would be given in the *Annual Pastoral Address* of the Conference, to be prepared, as usual, at the close of their sittings. It has, however, been found more convenient, that such information should be presented to you, distinctly and separately, in the form of a *Special Address* to our Societies. The is the design of the present document, respecting which it is deemed necessary here to recite the following Resolution, *unanimously* adopted by the Conference (see Minutes of 1835, page 113), viz. :—

Q. XXIV. What explanations and improvements shall we adopt in reference to the existing Rules and Usages of our Connexion?

A. 1. With respect to the *essential principles* and *fundamental regulations* of our established discipline, we are unanimously and deliberately resolved, in the fear of God, and on the most conscientious conviction of duty, to make no change whatever; but to “walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing.” Our views on this subject are recorded in a document entitled “The Answer of the Conference to an Address,” &c., dated Sheffield, August 6th, 1835, and largely circulated among our Societies at an early period of this Conference. That document contains our final decision on this point; and we direct that it shall be officially printed in connexion with the Minutes of the present year.

2. In accordance, however, with the pledge given in Article V. of the said “Answer to an Address,” the Conference has proceeded to take into its most affectionate and careful consideration, as far as time could be found for such a task, when the *indispensable* business of its session had been transacted, some of the most material of those subjects of discipline which have of late excited the attention of the Connexion. The result of these deliberations, on the several topics of—“Financial Affairs,” “Expulsion of Members,” “Meetings for communicating with the Conference by Memorial,” and “Proposed

\* “But he (the chairman) must never individually *interfere* with any circuit but his own.”—Min. of Con. 1792, republished 1797.



Revision of our Rules in general," has been embodied in a "Special Address to the Wesleyan Methodist Societies," which, as well as the usual "Pastoral Address," shall be appended to the present Minutes, as an official document, fully recognised by the Conference as its unanimous act and deed, and signed as such by the President and Secretary. Most earnestly do the Conference hope and pray, that the explanations and improvements which it details may be found satisfactory to the real friends of the Connexion, and received by the Societies at large in the same spirit of cordial affection, and earnest desire for the preservation of Christian peace and unity, in which they have been prepared and adopted on the part of the Conference. They are now solemnly commended to the calm and kindly attention of our beloved people, and, above all, to the blessing of God.

Without further preface, the Conference now proceed to lay before you the result of their long and anxious deliberations on the several topics enumerated in the resolution just quoted.

#### I. FINANCIAL AFFAIRS.

1. The Conference has long felt it to be both just and expedient, and to themselves (as a body of Christian ministers) *exceedingly agreeable*, that the active management of the financial affairs of the Connexion, whether local or general, should be undertaken, as far as possible, by laymen of established character for integrity, Christian principle, and steadfast attachment to the interests of Methodism,—accustomed to the transaction of similar business,—able to command sufficient leisure for such "labours of love" as are needed in this department of the "work of the Lord,"—and willing to consecrate that leisure to the service of our common cause. The Conference heartily concurs in the principle, that those of our public funds which are wholly or chiefly supported by the contributions of our people at large (although these contributions, as it is well known, are principally *obtained* by the public exertions and private applications of the preachers themselves), should be expended, under the general direction of the Conference, by *committees*, composed not of preachers only, but of *preachers and laymen conjointly*. In our *very peculiar* system of itinerancy and connexional union, the assistance of the preachers in such committees will always be found indispensable to the good practical working of the several funds; because *they* obviously possess a more intimate and personal acquaintance with the circumstances and necessities of our work, in its varied relations and mutual bearings, and in its now widely-extended field of operation, than *local men*, however able and devoted, can possibly acquire. And it would not be equitable or reasonable to demand, that those whose influence and activity are mainly relied upon for *procuring* pecuniary support to our institutions, and whose individual and ministerial character is therefore *pledged to the public* for the right application of the funds which they are employed to advocate and maintain, should be systematically excluded from the committees to which those funds are confided. On the other hand, it is equally just and advantageous that the body of contributors should have, in the respectable lay-members united with the preachers in the committees, a sufficient *security* for the proper and careful expenditure of the public money. By the plan of mixed committees both these objects are accomplished; and all parties, who, either by personal service or pecuniary benevolence, have a share in the work of *contribution*, are enabled to exercise a fair and salutary influence in the subsequent work of *distribution*.

2. These views and principles *are not new* in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. They have been for many years in extensive operation among us. The shameless assertions of some modern adversaries of our body, that our people have little or no share, according to our existing economy, in the management of their financial concerns, and that the preachers are desirous to have in their own hands either the exclusive control, or the *onerous* and *active* management, of the public funds of the body, is a calumny which the Conference are bold to meet with a positive and justly indignant denial. Most gladly would they be exempted, if a sufficient number of other persons of adequate leisure and influence could be found to undertake the task, from much of that labour, even in *soliciting* pecuniary support for our work, to which the necessity of the case, and their love for the cause of God, alone induce them now to submit.

It is matter of notoriety, that *all the local contributions* of our Societies and friends, constituting by far the largest portion of the whole financial concerns of the Connexion, are now, and have been for a long series of years, regularly paid into the hands of the society stewards and circuit stewards annually appointed for this purpose, and expended by them, or under their entire superintendence and direction, according to our established usages and rules. A report of their management in these matters is constantly made by the stewards to the quarterly meetings of their respective circuits.

As to the contributions to those *public funds*, by which our various institutions for the general purposes of the Connexion, or for objects of piety and benevolence, are supported, they are in like manner *generally* expended under the superintendence of *mixed* committees, constituted on the principles above stated. Every *security* which can be reasonably desired in a *religious* community like ours is thus afforded, that the moneys liberally contributed shall be honestly expended in effecting the great purposes for which they are solicited and designed. This has long been the established practice with respect to the *Missionary Fund* and the *General Chapel Fund*. Last year the Conference spontaneously applied the same principle to the *School Fund*; and they are now not merely willing, but anxious, that it should be fully extended also to the *only two remaining* funds, which are at all materially or generally aided by the contributions of our people; namely, the *Contingent Fund* and the *Preachers' Auxiliary Fund*.

3. With respect to the *Contingent Fund*, which derives its means of usefulness principally from what are termed the *Yearly Collection* in the classes, and the *July or Home Missionary Collection* in our congregations, and to which the Conference affords considerable aid by a voluntary donation from the profits of our Book-room,—the largest part of its annual income, by much, is employed in supplying the deficiencies of the poorer and smaller circuits in Great Britain and Ireland, and especially of those of new and infant stations, unable, as yet, to meet fully their own local expenses. These, which are called the *Ordinary Deficiencies*, are regularly examined and adjusted, for the current year, at the financial district meetings in September, and the subsequent annual district meetings in May; when *two circuit stewards* from each circuit in the district are earnestly requested to attend, and have an equal right with the preachers to speak and vote on every financial question. The whole grant made from the Contingent Fund to that District is divided among the several *claimant circuits* in their presence, and with their assistance and concurrence. Thus, by far the greatest portion even of the *Contingent Fund* is *already* placed under an efficient control, by means of a *mixed* meeting. It only remains to apply the same principle to the distribution of that part of the same fund which is expended on what are called the *Extraordinary Deficiencies* of the year, including grants for—"Travelling Expenses," "Afflictions," "Furniture" for Preachers' Houses, and "Miscellaneous Expenses" of various kinds, especially those connected with the executive department of our general work, as directed by the Conference, and the due administration of our discipline. These "Extraordinaries" have hitherto, for the sake of convenience, been settled at the time of the Annual Conference, in a meeting of the chairmen of the several districts. But the Conference now resolves as follows, viz.:—

(1.) That the entire portion of the business of the Contingent Fund, which cannot be finally settled by the preachers and stewards in the local district meetings, shall henceforth be confided to a *mixed* committee, who shall meet in the week before the annual assembly of the Conference, and be called, "The Committee of the Contingent Fund," consisting of the President and Secretary of the Conference, and of thirty other members, viz., *fifteen preachers*, to be annually appointed by the Conference, and *fifteen laymen*, to be annually chosen from the districts which are most contiguous to the place where the Conference is to be held, or from which it is likely that laymen of suitable leisure and information may be induced to attend the ensuing Conference. The appointment of these lay members shall rest *exclusively* with the *circuit stewards* of those districts which shall be specified in the Minutes of the Conference from year to year, as most conveniently situated for this purpose; and shall take place at the time of their assembly in the *May* district meetings, as soon as they shall have finished the business connected with the *Ordinary* Deficiencies of their respective districts.

(2.) That *two* treasurers and two secretaries of the Contingent Fund shall be annually appointed, who shall be *ex-officio* members of the committee. One of the treasurers shall in future be a lay member of the Society.

(3.) That the same committee, or such members of it as can conveniently be present, shall be the *Committee of Distribution*, who shall meet at the close of each Conference, or as soon as the stations of the preachers shall have been finally settled, for the purpose of allotting to each district its fair and necessary share, according to its means and probable expenditure, of the gross sum which they may deem it proper to devote, out of the estimated income of the ensuing year, to the payment of "Ordinary Deficiencies" in the circuits. At this final meeting they shall also *complete* the settlement of the "Extraordinaries" for the *past* year, by examining those items of *Miscellaneous Expenditure*, belonging to that department,

the exact amount of which could not be ascertained at an earlier period, because they necessarily depend upon various executive arrangements which can be determined only during the course of the proceedings of each successive Conference.

(4.) That to the said mixed committee of the Contingent Fund shall likewise be confided, at their meetings in the week before the Conference, the duty of examining and regulating the affairs of *the Children's Fund*; for which purpose the two treasurers of that fund (one of whom shall, as now, be always a lay member of the Society), and also its secretary, when he can conveniently attend the Conference, shall be *ex-officio* members of the Committee of the Contingent Fund.

(5.) That the chairman and the financial secretary of each district shall be desired to attend the meetings of the committee of the Contingent Fund, during the time at which the applications from that district shall be under consideration, in order to state in person the cases which they have to recommend, as agreed upon at their respective district meetings in May, and to make the committee fully acquainted with the circumstances of every claimant circuit or individual.

4. In reference to *the Preachers' Auxiliary Fund*, the Conference resolves as follows, viz.—

(1.) That the annual distribution of the sums contributed by our friends to this fund shall in future be entrusted to a committee, consisting of the President and Secretary of the Conference, with *eleven preachers* and *eleven laymen*, to be appointed from year to year by the Conference; such distribution being conducted according to the general plans and regulations hitherto adopted, and on the principles of a becoming tenderness and respectful feeling towards the aged preachers, or widows, or orphan children of deceased preachers, who may apply for assistance; as well as with a sacred regard to the *confidential* character of any communications made by them, or on their behalf, in reference to their private affairs and necessities.

(2.) That *two* treasurers, one preacher and *one layman*, and also a secretary, shall be appointed at each Conference, who shall be *ex-officio* members of the committee.

(3.) The treasurer for the time being of *the Seniors' Fund*, which is partially assisted by an annual grant from the Auxiliary Fund, shall also be, *ex officio*, a member of the committee of that fund, in order that he may give such information as may be deemed necessary or advantageous.

## II. EXPULSION OF MEMBERS.

1. During the life of Mr. Wesley, and for a short period afterwards, the superintendent (formerly called "the assistant") possessed, according to the primitive rules and established usage of the Connexion, the entire and unrestricted power of excluding from the Society any members whom, on account of their habitual and persevering violation of the laws of God, or of any of our General Rules, he judged to be improper for our Christian communion. This power was subject only, in the case of an appeal, to the paternal interference of Mr. Wesley, while he lived, and after his death, to that of the district committees and of the Conference. (See the 7th head of the General Rules, dated May 1, 1743.)

2. It was subsequently agreed, in 1794 (see Minutes, vol. i. p. 299), to regulate and limit the power of the superintendent, by a formal engagement then made on the part of the Conference, that the preachers should "*consult* the stewards and leaders" before they proceeded to any act of expulsion; the admission and expulsion of members being, however, at the same time, explicitly recognised as among those "*spiritual* concerns of the Society," which, in contradistinction to "*temporal* concerns," had "*ever*" been, and should continue to be, "*managed by the preachers.*" This legal provision for "*consultation*" applied to members *generally*. But a distinct and special provision was made, in the same year, in reference to trustees, viz.—"*No trustee (however accused, or defective in conforming to the established rules of the Society) shall be removed from the Society unless his crime or breach of the Rules of the Society be proved in the presence of the trustees and leaders.*"

3. At length, in 1797 (see Minutes, vol. i. p. 375), instead of this simple "*consultation*" of the stewards and leaders, it was enacted that *no person* should be expelled for immorality, till such immorality had been "*proved at a leaders' meeting*;" or, as this clause appears to have been afterwards explained, "*proved to the satisfaction*" of the leaders' meeting. And the intention of this new enactment is officially recorded to have been, to deliver the members of our Societies from every apprehension of *clandestine* expulsions. "That superintendent," it is

stated, "would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice in the presence of the whole meeting of leaders. Such a superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and if there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren."

4. The case to which this rule of 1797 applies, must necessarily be understood as being that of a member who *demand a trial* at the leaders' meeting. "The far greater number," it is truly stated, "*exclude themselves* by utterly forsaking us." (See "Form of Discipline," 1797, sect. vi.) Continued absence from the class-meeting, or other means of grace, without any sufficient reason, or some manifest breach of the laws of God, or of the particular rules of our own Connexion, is usually in such cases reported by the class-leader to the preacher, at the time of the quarterly visitation. If there be no denial of the fact, or satisfactory defence against the charge, on the part of the member, or of his friends who may be present, and if the preacher, in the case of alleged crime or misconduct, be of opinion that the offence is one of such grave and serious character as to require some public testimony of disapprobation, the immediate exclusion of the negligent or offending member has usually resulted, quietly, and as a matter of course, by the preacher's withholding his society-ticket, and erasing his name from the class-book. But if the member so charged deny the allegation of wilful neglect of our peculiar discipline as to class-meetings, &c., or of a breach of some law of Scripture or rule of Methodism, and demand a trial for the proof or disproof thereof before the leaders' meeting, or before a committee of leaders appointed by that meeting, then such trial must, as our law now stands, and has stood ever since 1797, be forthwith conceded. If a majority of the leaders who vote at the meeting shall be "satisfied" that sufficient proof is adduced to establish the fact of a wilful and habitual negligence, or of the violation of some scriptural or Methodistical rule, and shall give a verdict to that effect, then the leaders' meeting has discharged *its whole part* of the painful duty to be performed, and the case is left in the hands of the superintendent. On *him* devolves, in his pastoral character, as the person whose peculiar call and province it is to "watch over that soul" as one that "must give an account," the sole right and duty of deciding on the measures to be adopted towards the offender, in consequence of the verdict thus pronounced. He must consider his solemn responsibility, personally and officially, to God and to the Church of Christ, and his special obligation to care most tenderly and anxiously for the spiritual and eternal welfare of the individual whose conduct is implicated; and, impartially applying the laws of God, as found in the Holy Scriptures, or the specific rules of our body (as the case may be), to the facts which have been declared to have been proved as involving a violation of those laws or rules, he must prayerfully form the best judgment he can, respecting the nature and degree of the ecclesiastical penalty most fit to be inflicted; whether censure and reproof, in private or in public,—temporary suspension from Methodistical privileges,—putting the member back again into a state of mere probation,—or, finally, the extreme penalty of expulsion.

5. This the Conference solemnly declare to be, in their conscientious judgment, the import and intent, even according to the most *large* and *liberal* interpretation which can with truth and fairness be given, of our rules and usages, collectively considered, and as they now exist, in reference to this part of our pastoral discipline. The power of determining the sentence to be passed on an offender, thus uniformly and from the beginning reserved to our superintendents, the Conference believe to be essential to the scriptural duties and functions of the pastoral office. Those duties and functions they can on no account consent to abandon, or permit to be frittered away; for that would seriously endanger the purity and peace of our Connexion, on the one hand, and the rights, liberties, and spiritual privileges of our people, on the other hand. The pastoral duty and power, vested in the Christian ministry, to exclude obstinate offenders from our religious fellowship, for manifest violations of the general laws of the Holy Scriptures, or of the particular rules of our Connexion, are clearly essential to peace and purity. The correlative power of the pastor, who, if a man of God, "naturally cares" for the flock, to decide, after the case has been proved, on the adoption either of some mild and corrective sentence or of the severer one of expulsion, according to his own deliberate and conscientious views of the whole affair, and all its circumstances, is equally essential to the *protection* of an accused individual from the effects of personal prejudice or irritation, or of popular excitement and undue local influence.

6. Asserting, however, in the strongest manner, the scriptural principles now stated, and which have governed our discipline from the beginning, the Conference

do nevertheless most cheerfully agree to adopt the following *additional guards* and *securities* to our people, for the *proper exercise* of the powers confided to superintendents in cases of expulsion:—

(1.) No sentence of expulsion shall hereafter be pronounced by any superintendent *in the same meeting* at which the *trial* shall have taken place. To afford time for full inquiry into the past character of the party, and other circumstances, and for calm and careful deliberation, the sentence shall be deferred for *at least one week* after the trial; unless the superintendent be fully satisfied at once, that the case is one in which some of the milder forms of discipline should alone be adopted, and that expulsion is not at all to be contemplated.

(2.) In difficult or doubtful cases, the superintendent is now further directed, not to proceed to the actual sentence of expulsion without privately asking information from such individual leaders, or other judicious and experienced members of the Society, as are most likely to put him into full possession of all the circumstances necessary to his forming, with due discretion and caution, his own final judgment on the subject.

(3.) Every case of proposed expulsion shall be brought by the superintendent before the weekly meeting of the preachers of his circuit, in order that he may have the advantage of hearing the opinions and advice of his colleagues and co-pastors, before he shall finally decide on the course he ought to adopt.

(4.) In all cases of dissatisfaction with the sentence of expulsion pronounced by a superintendent, the aggrieved person shall have, as heretofore, the right of appeal to the annual meeting of the preachers of his district, and even, if still dissatisfied, to the Conference, who will hear him by a committee or by a special deputation, and endeavour to decide according to truth, and to the requirements of Holy Scripture and of our discipline.

(5.) But as it is readily admitted that the appeal to the full district committee or to the Conference may possibly be found, practically, too inconvenient to admit of a sufficiently prompt and easy application, except in cases of extraordinary interest and importance; the Conference now agrees and resolves, That the *principle* of the rule of 1793 (see Minutes, vol. i. p. 277), respecting the appointment of *minor* district committees in the case of preachers, shall be extended also to the case of all excluded members, who choose to avail themselves of its provisions. An excluded person shall, therefore, have the right of selecting *any two* preachers of the district to which his circuit belongs, and the superintendent shall select *two other* such preachers; and these four, with the chairman of the district (or if it happen that the chairman is himself the superintendent whose act is impugned, then some other preacher to be chosen by the four other members as their chairman *pro tempore*), shall meet in some convenient place, and shall have the power of modifying, reversing, or confirming the sentence against which such appeal shall be made. Their decision shall in such case be binding on all parties, unless subsequently altered, on further appeal, by the full district committee or by the Conference.

(6.) These additional guards and securities for our people against the possibility of rash and unwarrantable expulsions, by granting an appeal from the decision of an individual superintendent to the collective judgment and wisdom of *a number of pastors*, being cheerfully adopted, the Conference considers it both necessary and reasonable, at the same time, to provide an equally easy, prompt, and convenient remedy for *another case*, which may possibly arise in seasons of peculiar excitement, though it is confidently hoped that it will be found to be one of only rare occurrence. The case intended, is that of the majority of a leaders' meeting, before whom a member accused may be put on his trial, being induced, through some undue local interest, or influence, or prejudice, so far to forget its duty to God, and to the purity, peace, and good order of our Connexion, as to bring in, factiously and perversely, a verdict notoriously inconsistent with *the facts proved*, and with the plain and obvious meaning, and the general or specific regulations, of *the laws of God or of our own body*, as applicable to these facts,—or as even, in certain conceivable cases, to refuse to give any verdict at all;—thus, in either case, defeating the ends of public justice, and preventing, by an abuse of their constitutional functions, the exercise of that discipline which Christ has commanded, and for which he has made the ministers of his church responsible to himself. It is true, that our present rules provide an ultimate remedy for such an occasional and extraordinary occurrence, by the powers given to regular and special district committees, in 1791, 1792, and subsequent years, and confirmed and extended in 1797. But that remedy, though sufficient, when actually called into operation, to



provide for "any critical case," and to "redress any grievance," is not of easy and convenient application. There is the same reason for affording *facilities* of redress to a superintendent, obstructed in his pastoral duties by the prevalence of a contumacious and factious spirit, as for granting those facilities to an aggrieved member, complaining of the prejudice or severity of his superintendent. The Conference therefore resolves, That a superintendent, complaining of any leaders' meeting for refusing to act its constitutional part, or for acting it factiously or in contradiction to law and evidence, in the trial of an accused member, shall have the same right of prompt appeal to the revision of a *minor* district committee, as has just been granted to an excluded member in the other case supposed.

7. In almost every case, it is presumed that this minor district committee will be sufficient to accomplish the purposes of general peace and purity, and at least "settle everything till the Conference." But if not, there is still in reserve, where it may be found absolutely necessary, the power of calling a *special* district meeting, consisting of the whole number of the Christian pastors of that district, who shall be in full connexion with the Conference, according to our existing rules respecting district committees; whose powers, either in the cases here particularly intended, or in any other cases, nothing contained in this document shall be construed to weaken or abridge. In reference to the constitution of *special district meetings*, on whatever subject such meetings may hereafter be deemed necessary, and in order to render their decisions satisfactory to our people, the Conference resolves, That instead of "three of the nearest superintendents," chosen by the superintendent who calls the meeting, *four* superintendents or *other* preachers may be called in, if either party desire such assistance, and be incorporated with the preachers stationed in the district. Of these, *two shall be chosen by each of the two parties* concerned in the affairs to be settled by the meeting. The parties may severally make choice of preachers in whom they have most confidence, from *any* district, *without restriction as to contiguity*; and the President of the Conference, if he judge it expedient, may attend and preside in all such assemblies, according to the regulations of 1797. The right of appeal to the Conference from the decisions of this, as of all other inferior jurisdictions, is to be considered as reserved to all parties.

8. In the preceding articles of this document, reference has been repeatedly made to the *law of God contained in the Holy Scriptures*, as furnishing, in the trial of members, that *primary* standard of judgment by which the innocence or culpability of any particular facts adduced in evidence is ever to be determined. This principle, though obvious, and scarcely needing argumentative defence, the Conference have advisedly made prominent in this statement of their views. Any conduct in a man professing godliness, which can be shown to be decidedly condemned by the precepts and principles of the New Testament, is surely sufficient to justify, if persisted in, the application of a suitable ecclesiastical censure or other penalty to such an individual, even though it may not have been previously found necessary to make a distinct and specific rule of our own Society on that exact mode and form of delinquency. The New Testament *law of purity*, in reference both to the pastors and members of the Christian Church, and with respect both to doctrine and practice,—its often-repeated *law of peace* and *godly quietness*,—and its *laws of courtesy, brotherly kindness*, and mutual *charity*,—as well as its direction that "all things" should "be done decently and in order," and its requirement of reasonable submission, on the part of church members, to the scriptural "rule" of those who are "over them in the Lord,"—these are *standing enactments* of the Gospel, binding on all Christian communities, and therefore binding on the Methodist Societies, without exception. Any obstinate violation of them must be suitably visited, when proved; or else the authority of Jesus Christ himself, as the Lord and Master of our department of his spiritual house, will be criminally set at naught; and he will have just cause to say to the ministers and pastors of our community, as he did to one of old time, "I have somewhat against thee."

9. On considering, in connexion with these scriptural principles, the present state of several circuits, and the system of organised agitation and disturbance in which certain persons have publicly threatened to proceed in the course of the coming year, the Conference deem it necessary to take this opportunity of explicitly declaring their views on that subject, and of giving such general directions to the superintendents as the exigency appears to demand.

The self-called "Grand Central Association," considered as to its character of *confederacy* and *combination*, and its extensive schemes of disorder and mischief, is, in those respects, somewhat unusual and strange; and some other persons also,



avoiding a *formal* connexion with the association, have applied themselves with unwonted activity and insidious concert to plans and efforts of factious agitation. Hence, some of the friends of good order have supposed that *new* rules were wanting to check these new forms of evil, and have called on the Conference to protect, by some additional enactments, the peaceable and well-disposed members of our numerous Societies from the menaced annoyance and insult. It should, however, be considered that the circumstances which are most characteristic and essential in the constitution and conduct of the Association, and in the proceedings of other agents of faction, are plainly contrary even to our *existing rules and usages*, and to those *principles*, conservative of purity and peace, which the Conference has ever recognised and guarded by strong enactments. Thus, in 1795, it was resolved that any local preacher, trustee, steward, or leader, who should disturb the peace of the Connexion by speaking for or against "the old or new plan," then the subject of eager contention, should be expelled from the Society. And in 1796 it was enjoined, that "no man or number of men in our Connexion should, on any account or occasion, be allowed to circulate letters or call meetings," for the purpose of stirring up our people to divisive and innovating agitations. Such plans and proceedings, moreover, are plainly opposed to the supreme and unrepealable *law of Christ* in the New Testament, already repeatedly referred to in this Address. "Debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," are there deprecated and condemned in the strongest and most affecting terms. We are enjoined to mark them that *cause divisions*,—if any man that is called a brother be a *railer*, with such an one, no not to eat,—to live in peace, that the God of love and peace may be with us,—to let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from us,—to follow peace with all men,—if it be possible, as much as in us lieth, to live peaceably with all men,—to know them which labour among us, and are over us in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among ourselves,—to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,—and, finally, to desire that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. St. James declares that, "where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work; but the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." The Conference, for these reasons, deem it unnecessary at present to provide against these modern forms of offence by any new and more specific regulation; because so much of *moral evil* and *unchristian practice* is involved in the plan and proceedings of the said Association,—and of other similar confederacies, by whatever name disguised,—that to give them countenance, or to co-operate with them, is to be a partaker and abettor of various palpable transgressions of the commandments of God, and a violator, in some instances of the letter, and in others of the whole spirit and tenor, of our established rules. It is therefore hereby declared to be the unanimous judgment of the Conference, That any person who, instead of *peaceably retiring* from our Connexion, if he decidedly disapprove of our system either of doctrine or discipline, and cannot conscientiously even *acquiesce* in them, endeavours to retain and to employ his position among us for the purposes of opposition and strife,—or who continues, after due admonition, to be a member of "The Grand Central Association," or of any other confederacy formed for the object of systematic agitation,—is guilty of a flagrant transgression of that *morality of the New Testament*, the observance of which was a principal condition of his admission into our Society, and must be considered to have justly forfeited his claim to the privileges of our religious fellowship. In applying to particular cases this righteous general rule, the Conference exhorts all the superintendents to exercise, in connexion with a holy firmness, the moderation and mercy of the Gospel; bearing long and dealing tenderly, though faithfully, with the weak, the ill-informed, and the misled; while they do not shrink from the effectual execution of necessary Christian discipline on those who by overt acts of hostility and disturbance identify themselves as the leaders or open partisans of disaffection and faction. The sound and satisfied majority of our Societies—a majority happily so immense as to render all comparative calculations unnecessary—have a just claim on us for protection in the quiet enjoyment of their religious privileges; a claim which some of them have most forcibly urged, and which it is our bounden duty to meet with a discreet but decisive enforcement of our discipline on those whom milder methods shall fail to reclaim from their course of disturbance and mischief.

### III. MEETINGS FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE CONFERENCE BY MEMORIAL, ON SUBJECTS OF LOCAL CONCERN, OR ON THE GENERAL LAWS OF THE CONFERENCE.

The spirit and substance of our *present* regulations and authorised usages on this subject the Conference considers to be embodied in the following summary statement:—

1. The Conference have said that they, as well as the district committees, will gladly receive useful intelligence and information, even from any individual member of the Society, "on whatever concerns themselves or their people." (See Minutes of 1796.)

2. "The *leaders' meeting* is the proper meeting for the Society, and the *quarterly meeting* for the circuit." (Minutes of 1797.) From those meetings, therefore, the Conference will receive communications, whenever they may deem it *necessary* to make them, on subjects connected with *the proper business of their own Societies or of their own circuits*, respectively.

3. After full discussion and deliberation, it was judged (in 1797) that "*other formal meetings*, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences." The grounds of this judgment were, doubtless, such as these:—The "*other formal meetings*," to which reference is made, are obviously *unnecessary* for the purposes of *individual* representations of fact, or for communication with the Conference on the really difficult and important affairs of a particular Society or circuit; the fullest provision being made for all these cases by the preceding articles of the same rule. If *unnecessary*, they are for that reason *undesirable*; because *occasions* of contention and debate ought not to be needlessly multiplied, especially in a *religious* society, which is bound by the law of Christ to "follow after the things which make for peace, and things where-with one may edify another." Christians should rather sacrifice unessential points of opinion or matters of personal predilection, than endanger by an eager obtrusion of their own views the maintenance of tranquillity and good feeling in the communities to which they belong. If the object of those who wish for the "*other formal meetings*," to which the Minute of 1797 objects, be the suggestion of any improvements in our various public institutions, then, too, are they, generally speaking, as unnecessary as in the case of society or circuit business; for in all those institutions committees are now appointed, in which preachers and laymen of unimpeachable integrity and intelligence have a place, which committees have, as such, regular official communication with the Conference on every subject connected with their respective trusts and interests. "*Other formal meetings*" cannot be needed in order to obtain redress for the alleged misconduct or mal-administration of any particular preacher or preachers, because the most ample means of obtaining such redress are already secured to complaining parties *connected with the circuit immediately concerned*, by our existing rules respecting the trial of accused preachers. It seems, then, that no very material and legitimate business remains for the "*other formal meetings*" in question, except it be the transmission to the Conference of opinions respecting some desired change in the *general laws of the Connexion*. Now, it should be considered that frequent alterations in the laws of a religious community, when they have once been deliberately settled, are neither safe nor advantageous. Such questions should not be hastily or capriciously mooted, as they usually tend to "*gender strifes*" rather than to "*godly edifying*." A habit of petty, meddling, speculative legislation would be a dire calamity. It is not good in matters of discipline, any more than of doctrine, to be "*ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth*,"—ever making new laws, or trying to mend existing ones, instead of keeping those already in force, and endeavouring to turn them to the best account for the spiritual benefit of ourselves and others.

4. For reasons probably similar to those now stated, the Conference of 1797 did not feel themselves at liberty to establish or encourage "*other formal meetings*." They did not, however, wholly prohibit them, as matters of occasional occurrence; being willing, it appears, to provide, if possible, for the permanent tranquillity of the Connexion in circumstances extraordinary as well as ordinary. They, therefore, appended to the statement last quoted the following rule:—

"In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our Societies, *we allow that other formal meetings may be held*, if they first receive the approbation of the superintendent and the leaders'

*district*  
*through*  
*address*  
*conference*  
*through the*  
*circles*

or quarterly meetings; provided also, that the superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting."

*The present Conference* have considered with the most respectful attention the wish which appears to have been of late revived among several of our sincere friends, that some direct and authorised medium of occasional communication with the Conference should now be provided for our people, in reference to a certain class of subjects, which do indeed concern *the general laws*, and consequently the practical administration, of Methodism; but which, because they do not affect them in their individual capacity as members, nor yet relate, strictly or directly, to the local affairs of their particular Society or circuit, cannot, for that reason, be made the topics of discussion or of memorial in the leaders' or quarterly meetings, without violating a great and important general maxim, essential to a due observance of the Christian *law of peace*, and to the orderly transaction of our public business, viz., that every meeting among us shall confine itself to its proper and definite province, do *its own work* in the spirit of piety and kindness, and refrain from interfering with the work of others. Anxious to maintain this maxim in its full authority, and concurring *generally* in all the reasons stated in the preceding article, as rendering "other formal meetings" undesirable and unnecessary (except, perhaps, on *very special* occasions), this Conference are nevertheless solicitous, like their venerable predecessors of 1797, to meet, as far as the public peace and safety will permit, the *wish* above described. On careful deliberation, the Conference are of opinion that the *principle* of the concluding portion of the law of 1797, already quoted, will be found to furnish the best and most expedient means of accomplishing all that can be reasonably desired. But it must be confessed, that the *details* of the rule, as it now stands, appear to be so vague and otherwise defective, as to require considerable alteration and extension. The Conference, therefore, now agrees as follows, viz.—

(1.) That, *after the final close* of the June quarterly meeting in every year, the superintendent shall detain the circuit stewards and all the society stewards who may be present, whether belonging to the societies in the circuit town or to those in the country places; and shall ascertain from them whether there really exists, *in that circuit*, a general or considerable dissatisfaction with any of our existing rules, or a prevalent and earnest desire for the enactment of any new and additional regulations. If it be the opinion of a majority of the persons so consulted, or even of any considerable proportion of them, that the wish for alteration is strong and extensive, and moreover, that the matter is clearly of such importance as to justify the calling of a *special circuit meeting*, in order to consider the propriety of sending a memorial to the Conference on the subject; then, and in every such case, the superintendent is hereby *directed and required* to summon, by good and sufficient notices to all the parties concerned, such special circuit meeting, which shall assemble within a period of not less than seven days and not exceeding ten days from the time of the June quarterly meeting. The power of a *veto*, in reference to the calling of such meetings, given to the superintendents by the old rule of 1797, is hereby *wholly repealed and abolished*; and the provision above-stated is substituted for it.

(2.) That whereas the rule of 1797 did not at all *define* the composition of the "other formal meetings" partially allowed by it, it is now expedient to define the constitution of the special circuit meeting above-mentioned, if one shall be convened, in the following manner, viz., such meeting shall include,

All the travelling preachers of the circuit, comprehending the supernumerary preachers, if any;

The circuit stewards;

The stewards of the town Society, or of all the Societies (if there be more than one) in the circuit town;

One of the stewards of each of those other Societies which were entered on the latest circuit-schedule as containing fifty members or upwards;

The male class leaders in the circuit, of *ten years' continuous and uninterrupted standing* in that office;

The local preachers in the circuit, of *the same continuous and uninterrupted standing*, since they were first placed on the plan as local preachers *fully admitted*;

The trustees of the chapel or chapels of the circuit town (if regularly settled, and so secured to the use of the Connexion), *being members* of the Society; and

One of the trustee treasurers or trustee stewards of every other regularly settled and secured chapel in the circuit, *being a member* of the Society.

The superintendent, or, in the case of his unavoidable absence, some other travelling preacher appointed by him, shall always preside in the meeting.

(3.) That at such meeting any member thereof may propose for consideration, as before stated, the propriety of memorialising the Conference respecting the repeal or alteration of any of our existing laws, or of the enactment of any additional rule. Such memorial, if approved by a majority of the persons present, shall be signed *forthwith* by the individuals who concur in its adoption, and then immediately placed in the hands of the superintendent, who is made responsible for its delivery, personally or otherwise, to the President of the Conference, on or before the second day of its ensuing session. And all such memorials shall be received by the Conference, and referred to a committee of its members, who shall carefully examine, consider, and classify the whole, and report their opinion thereupon to the Conference.

(4.) That the right of memorial on the subject of our general legislation, thus recognised and allowed, shall, however, be exercised under the following regulations, which the Conference considers to be both sound and reasonable in principle, and really necessary in order to the prevention of great and serious evils:—First, *Notice* in writing shall be given to the superintendent, for the information of all who desire it, at least three days before the day of meeting, of the precise subject on which it is intended to propose that any memorial shall be sent to the Conference; and no proposal of which such timely notice has not been given, shall be allowed to be brought forward for that year. Secondly, All memorials requesting any change in our laws shall be limited to such changes only as are consistent with the *essential principles* of Wesleyan Methodism, and within the pale of our *established constitution*. The Conference cannot fairly be required to receive any propositions of a manifestly revolutionary character, or which are wholly subversive of that system of doctrine and discipline which has been confided to them by Mr. Wesley as a sacred deposit, and which, as they believe, has been also committed to their keeping by the providence and grace of God. Thirdly, the rules, whose alteration, repeal, or enactment may become the subject of discussion and memorial in such meetings, must be such rules only as have operated, or are intended to operate, *in the government of the Societies at large*. This is in literal accordance with the limitation adopted in 1797, in the analogous case of the “new laws,” to be submitted to the consideration of the September quarterly meeting. The disciplinary jurisdiction of the preachers over each other, and their right of regulating among themselves all that relates peculiarly and specifically to the Christian ministry and the pastoral office, are not to be considered as subjects open to the official interference by memorial of the meetings now constituted. Fourthly, The special meeting of one circuit shall not be at liberty to intermeddle with the local affairs or proceedings of any other circuit or circuits; respecting which, its information must often, of necessity, be exceedingly partial and defective, and its interference consequently, if attempted, must be as useless and even mischievous as it would be culpably officious, offensive, and unconstitutional. (See Minutes of 1828, vol. vi. pp. 399-401.) With these necessary limitations, the superintendents are directed to allow, in meetings constituted as aforesaid, the free and friendly discussions of our people, and to take charge of any memorial from them couched in proper and respectful terms.

#### IV. PROPOSED REVISION AND CLASSIFICATION OF OUR RULES IN GENERAL.

On this point the Conference have only to announce, at present, the appointment of a *committee*, who are charged with the duty of carefully considering the subject in all its bearings, and of adopting such measures as they may deem most effectual for preparing (if on examination they find it practicable and expedient) a new, revised, and improved edition of “The Form of Discipline,” first published in 1797, with proper explanations and enlargements. The result of these inquiries and endeavours is to be laid before the Conference at their next meeting in 1836. The members of this committee are,—the President of the Conference, the Rev. Joseph Taylor, Dr. Bunting, the Rev. Thomas Jackson, the Rev. John Waterhouse, the Rev. John Bowers, the Rev. George Cubitt, the Rev. John Hannah, the Rev. John Beecham, and the Rev. W. M. Bunting; who have power to add to their number any preachers or other friends, either in London or in the country, whose assistance may be found desirable, for the purpose of advice and consultation, in reference to this difficult but very interesting and desirable undertaking.\*

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\* This promised revision of the laws was never completed, if, indeed, it was ever begun. Thus do the Conference keep faith with the people.—Ed.

Such, dearly beloved Brethren, are the communications we have now to make to you, in respect to some of those topics which have of late engaged a more than usual attention in our body. We earnestly hope that the explanations now given of the import and design of some of our rules, and the modifications which we have seen it right to adopt, will meet the approbation of our enlightened and judicious friends, and satisfy all men of peace, piety, and moderation. It is on such persons only that this document, and the measures which it announces, are expected or designed to operate. May it please Almighty God to give us a right understanding in all things, and to send us abundant spiritual prosperity!

Signed, on behalf and by order of the Conference,

RICHARD REECE, *President.*

ROBERT NEWTON, *Secretary.*

SHEFFIELD, August 18th, 1835.

THE END.